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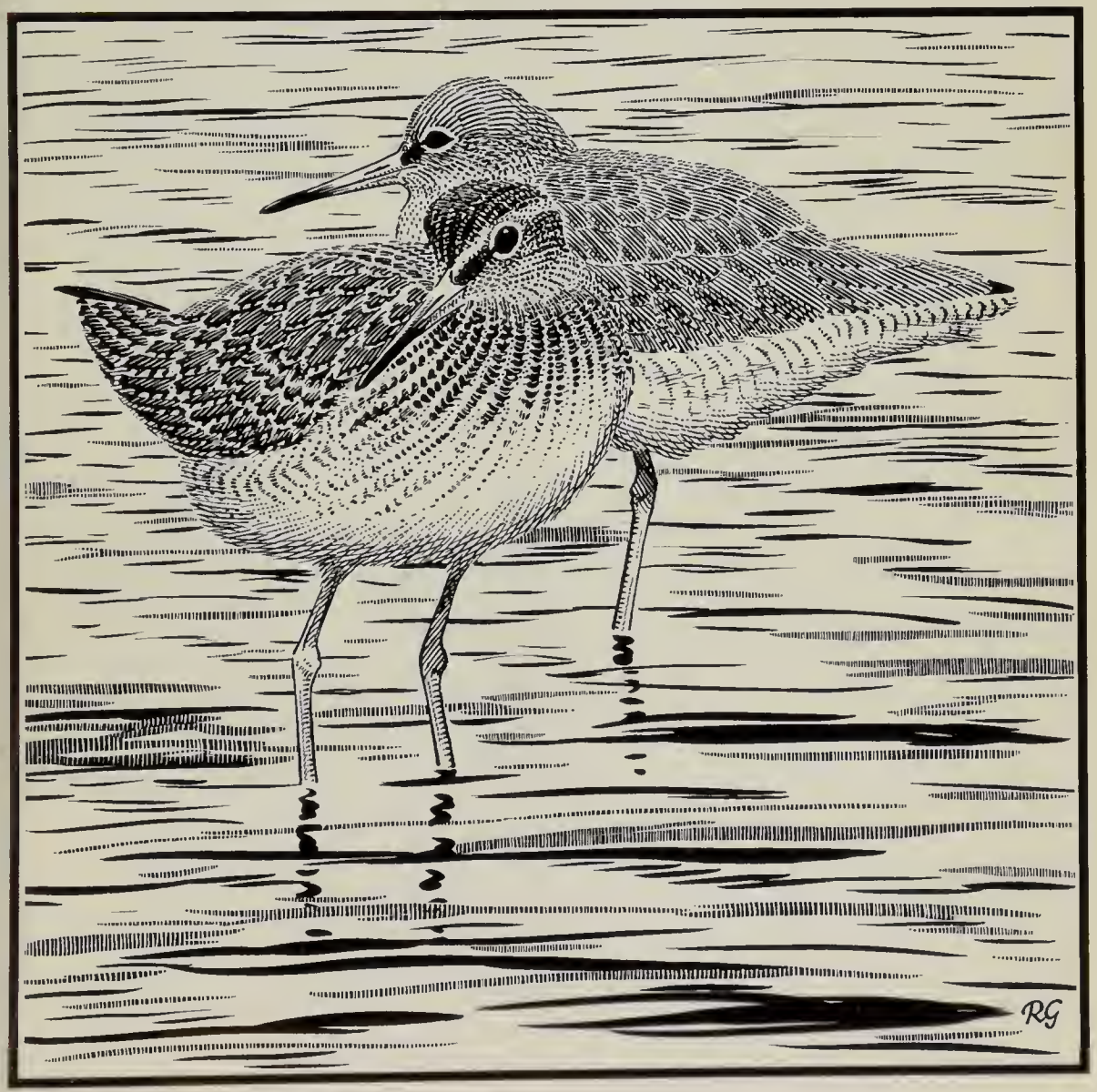
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Bird news for 'The ornithological year':
Barry Nightingale & Keith Allsopp, c/o 7 Bloomsbury Close, Woburn, Bedfordshire MK17 9QS. Phone: Woburn (01525) 290314 (evenings)

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★ **SEVENOAKS WILDFOWL RESERVE** on the A25 between Riverhead and Sevenoaks Bat and Ball station on **Sunday 7th January, 4th February, 3rd March and 7th April.**

★ **BOUGH BEECH NATURE RESERVE/RESERVOIR** about 4 miles south of the A25/A21 junction (with access from the B2042 or B2027; the information centre is to the north of the reservoir) on **Sunday 21st January, 18th February and 17th March.**

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★ **DINTON PASTURES COUNTRY PARK**, Near Reading, Berks, **Sunday 18th February and 14th April**, in the Loddon Room.

★ **BEWL WATER**, on A21 just south of Lamberhurst, Kent, in the Education Centre on **Sunday 24th March.**

★ **HENFIELD**, W. Sussex. Sussex Wildlife Trust at Woods Mill. **Sunday 24th March.**

★ **DENHAM COUNTRY PARK**, Bucks., (A40, M40 junction, A412, A413, etc) **Saturday 30th March.**

★ **BEACHY HEAD**, Eastbourne, E. Sussex (in the new Countryside Centre) **Sunday 31st March.**

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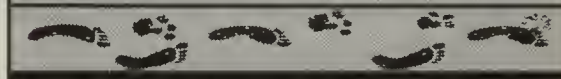
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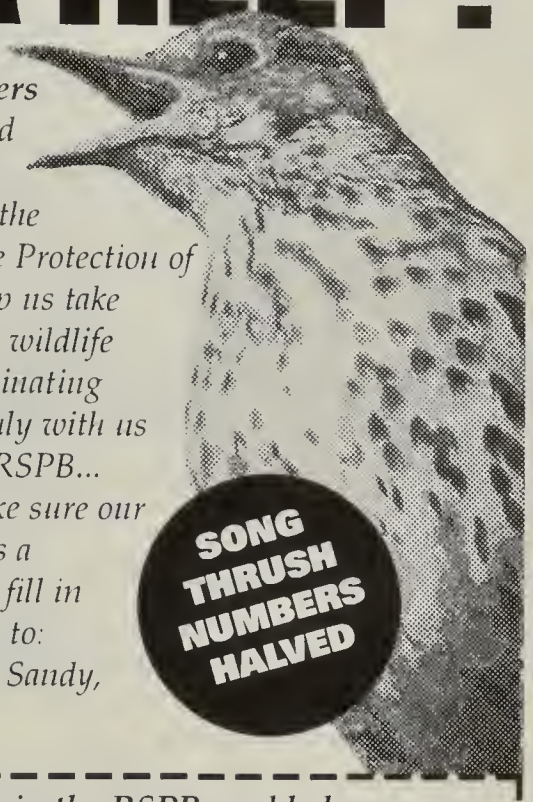
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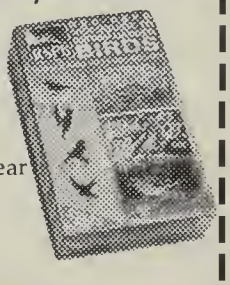
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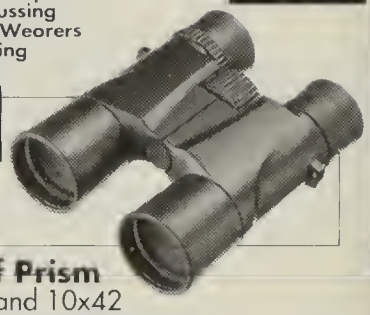
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SUNDAY 4TH PENNINGTON FLASH	GREATER MANCHESTER
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SUNDAY 11TH TOPHILL LOW NATURE RESERVE, BEVERLEY	YORKSHIRE
SUNDAY 11TH FISHERS GREEN, LEE VALLEY COUNTRYPARK	ESSEX
SATURDAY 17TH & SUNDAY 18TH WWT MARTIN MERE, ORMSKIRK	LANCASHIRE
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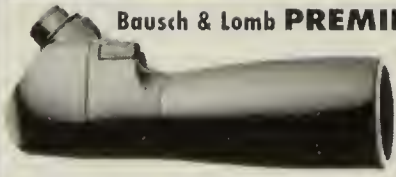


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Grey-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes: taxonomy, identification and the British and Irish records

Alan Knox

ABSTRACT The BOU Records Committee has recently accepted the taxonomic split of the mainly Nearctic Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* into two species: a restricted Grey-cheeked Thrush comprising the races *minimus* and *aliciae* and the monotypic Bicknell's Thrush *C. bicknelli*. Identification and ageing of the three forms is discussed.

The races *aliciae* and *minimus* are both larger than *bicknelli*, but measurements overlap. The plumage of *aliciae* is colder and greyer than the generally warmer and more rufous *minimus*. In this respect, *minimus* approaches *bicknelli*. Despite further differences in biometrics, vocalisations and bare-part colours between Grey-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes, the field identification of most migrants is not recommended at this stage.

The British records of 'Grey-cheeked Thrush' (in the wide sense) are reviewed. The single previously accepted record of *bicknelli* is no longer considered to be acceptable, and the form has been deleted from the British & Irish List.

This paper is an official publication of the British Ornithologists' Union.

The Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (as it is currently known) breeds in the boreal coniferous forests of North America and northeastern Siberia. The Nearctic distribution covers Alaska and northern Canada from the Yukon to Newfoundland and northern Nova Scotia and, in the mountains, south through New England.

Taxonomy and geographic variation

The species is usually divided into three races (Godfrey 1986; Ouellet 1993):

bicknelli has a restricted distribution and breeds on the mountains of eastern New York State, New England, southern Quebec and the Canadian Maritime Provinces;

minimus also has a restricted distribution, breeding only in Newfoundland, southern Labrador and extreme eastern Quebec;

aliciae nests over the remainder of the species' range, from Labrador to eastern Siberia.

Cramp (1988) followed the AOU (1957) in regarding *aliciae* as indistinguishable from *minimus*. Todd (1963) had, however, shown that *aliciae* is recognisable, a view shared by most subsequent authors (e.g. Godfrey 1986).

The three forms are rather similar in appearance. Nominate *minimus* and *aliciae* tend to be larger than *bicknelli* (table 1), but measurements overlap. The upperparts are dark olive-grey on *aliciae*, and browner on *minimus*. In *bicknelli*, the upperparts tend to be richer brown than those of *minimus*, especially on the tail. The plumage of all three forms is, however, quite variable (Wallace 1939; Ouellet 1993).

It has recently been suggested by Dr Henri Ouellet that the southern, New England and Maritime Province race should be treated as a separate species *C. bicknelli*, Bicknell's Thrush, with nominate *minimus* and *aliciae* remaining together as the Grey-cheeked Thrush *C. minimus* (Ouellet 1993). Ouellet showed that Bicknell's and Grey-cheeked Thrushes differ in several respects: size and, to a certain extent, plumage and bare-part colour; the breeding and wintering ranges of the two species do not overlap; they have different songs (and nocturnal flight-calls: Evans 1994), and playback experiments on the breeding grounds have shown that Bicknell's Thrushes do not respond to recordings of *minimus* or *aliciae*; there are differences in the breeding habitats of Bicknell's and Grey-cheeked Thrushes; there is no known hybridisation or intergradation; and analysis of mitochondrial DNA from Bicknell's and Grey-cheeked Thrushes has revealed sequence divergence (1.7%) which is greater than that of many avian sibling species (Ouellet 1993).

Following the American Ornithologists' Union (in press), the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (in press) has recently accepted that Bicknell's and Grey-cheeked Thrushes should be treated as separate species.

Field identification

Separation of migrant Grey-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes is complicated by the geographic variation within the former. Nominate *minimus* is noticeably browner and richer than *aliciae*. If individuals of *minimus* and *aliciae* were seen alongside one another, the former might be mistaken for *bicknelli*. Indeed, there

is a closer resemblance between some *minimus* and *bicknelli* than between *minimus* and the greyer and more olive *aliciae*.

There are several drawers containing skins of Grey-cheeked Thrushes at the Natural History Museum at Tring, but these include only a few breeding birds, hardly any correctly identified autumn *bicknelli*, and most of the non-breeding *minimus* and *aliciae* specimens are difficult to separate. To supplement the Tring material, I borrowed a short series of each of *aliciae*, *minimus* and *bicknelli* from the American Museum of Natural History. Using these together with the Tring specimens, I was able to confirm the essentials of the assessment of *aliciae* by Todd (1963).

UPPERPARTS, INCLUDING TAIL Nominate *minimus* is a lighter, warmer brown than the colder, darker, olive-brown or greyish-olive of *aliciae*. The edges to the primary coverts, greater coverts and primaries on the folded wing tend to be warmer and lighter on *minimus*, and contrast more with the rest of the upperparts and the dark tips to the primary coverts in particular.

UNDERPARTS On *minimus*, the spots on the breast tend to be lighter and less contrasting and, although there is much variation, the ground colour is often warmer. The flanks are also richer than the cooler grey of *aliciae*.

BARE PARTS Todd (1963) noticed that the pale area at the base of the lower mandible was larger on *minimus* than on *aliciae*, and, although there was much variation, this was also generally the case in the series available to me.

All these differences are best seen in series of birds rather than on individuals.

Differences between Grey-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes

Grey-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes are very alike. The greatest difference is in size, but measurements overlap, and size is unlikely to be helpful in separating the species in the field (table 1). In all other characters, there is considerable variation, and the differences between the species are not great. The tail is often more rufous on Bicknell's in breeding plumage, but this is less obvious in the autumn when the feathers are fresh (Ouellet *in litt.*). There are minor differences in bare-part colours. On Bicknell's Thrushes, the base of the lower mandible is bright, pale yellow. On Grey-cheeked Thrushes, the pale area at the base of the lower mandible tends to be less extensive and more typically flesh-coloured or yellowish-flesh, although some have uniformly horn-coloured bills. The legs of Bicknell's Thrush tend to have a purplish wash rather than the browner (horn) colour of Grey-cheeked Thrush, but this would be difficult to see in the field or to judge on lone birds. Similarly, the brighter yellow soles to the feet of Bicknell's Thrush are unlikely to help unless birds are trapped. Even so, comparison with known colours would be desirable.

Although there are differences in the song and the calls of Grey-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes, these are of no use with non-vocal autumn migrants. Within each of the two species, there is sufficient variation in plumage and bare-part colours to make it difficult or inadvisable, with present knowledge, to identify single autumn migrants in the field. The exception to this might be that very grey birds with restricted, flesh-coloured bases to the lower mandibles are almost certainly Grey-cheeked Thrushes of the race *aliciae*.

Table 1. Wing-lengths (in mm) of Grey-cheeked *Catharus minimus* and Bicknell's Thrushes *C. bicknelli* from various sources. M = mean. SD = standard deviation. (N) = number in sample. R = range

a. Chord of unflattened wing (from Ouellet 1993)

	Newfoundland *minimus*				Northern Quebec *aliciae*				*bicknelli*			
Sex	M	SD	(N)	R	M	SD	(N)	R	M	SD	(N)	R
Male	102	±2.9	(59)	95-107	103	±2.8	(31)	94-108	93	±2.7	(74)	85-99
Female	98	±2.2	(26)	93-103	99	±2.6	(15)	95-103	88	±3.9	(19)	82-95

b. Chord of unflattened wing (from Pyle *et al.* 1987)

	minimus & *aliciae*		*bicknelli*	
Sex	(N)	R	(N)	R
Male	(30)	100-109	(30)	88-98
Female	(30)	97-106	(22)	85-93

c. Presumed flattened wing (from Vaurie, in Williamson 1954; see Vaurie 1959: viii for Vaurie's measuring technique in latter work)

	minimus & *aliciae*	*bicknelli*
Sex	R	R
Male	103-112	89-101
Female	100-107	90-96

d. Chord of unflattened wing (from Wallace 1939)

	minimus			*aliciae*			*bicknelli*		
Sex	M	(N)	R	M	(N)	R	M	(N)	R
Male	103	(25)	98-108	103	(27)	98-108	93	(31)	89-97
Female	98	(17)	95-101	99	(18)	95-104	88	(16)	81-95

The identification of Grey-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes was recently discussed in detail by Curson (1994). Unfortunately, in presenting Ouellet's data, Curson did not mention that Ouellet's study was carried out mainly on breeding birds. Worn summer specimens are substantially different in appearance from autumn birds in fresh plumage. Furthermore, Curson did not discuss (or even mention) *aliciae*, and this seriously undermines the usefulness of the article, where almost every reference to differences between Grey-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes applies similarly to differences between *aliciae* and *minimus*.

The difficulties of interpreting subtle colours in photographs continue to be underestimated (Knox 1993, page 365). Photographs used by Curson (1994) to illustrate differences between Grey-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes actually provide examples of such photographic effects (e.g. plates 1-3 are of the same individual by the same photographer: in plate 2, the breast and upperparts are a warm brown shade, whereas in plate 3 they are cold olive; similarly, plates 4 & 5 are of another individual and again the colours are noticeably different in the two photographs; plates 6, 8 & 9 are of a claimed Bicknell's Thrush: plate 6 shows a bird with a warm hue to its plumage, in stark contrast to the colder, greyer plumage in plate 8; the colour of the bird in plate 10 is unlike any Grey-cheeked Thrush, yet colours are discussed in detail). The captions to these photographs and the editorial following the article fail to address these problems realistically.

For further examples of differences between photographs of an individual Grey-cheeked Thrush, see *Brit. Birds* 85: 542-543, 568, plates 236, 239, 251 & 252.

Ageing

First-years often have conspicuous pale tips to the greater coverts, but not all those birds with uniform coverts are adults. Several specimens of all three forms which I aged as first-winters on the basis of the pointed shape of their tail feathers had uniform coverts. Pyle *et al.* (1987) noted that about 15% of first-years had plain greater coverts. Whereas individuals with clear spots on the coverts may safely be aged as first-years, those with plain coverts are more reliably aged by the shape of the tail feathers (see Pyle *et al.* 1987, McMinn 1995). According to Wallace (1939), first-years tend to have browner wing-panels.

Vagrancy potential

With its large range and northerly distribution as far east as Labrador, *aliciae* is a likely vagrant to Britain and Ireland. Nominate *minimus*, breeding as it does in Newfoundland, starts its migration with a flight over open sea and is also a candidate for storm-diverted or ship-assisted passage. Given the more southerly range of *bicknelli* and its status as 'potentially endangered' (Faccio 1995), Bicknell's Thrush may be less likely than either of the other two forms to occur as a vagrant in Europe, although it has occurred in Bermuda (Ouellet *in litt.*).

British and Irish records

The first British Grey-cheeked Thrushes were trapped on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 5th October 1953 (Williamson 1954) and 29th October 1958 (Davis 1959). In all, there has been a total of 43 Grey-cheeked Thrushes in Britain and Ireland to the end of 1994 (Fitzharris 1983; Rogers *et al.* 1995; Smiddy & O'Sullivan 1994). Of these, no fewer than 17 have been trapped, were found dead or died later (table 2).

Present location of the dead birds

3. BARDSEY, 1961 It was particularly important to find this specimen as it is the only one said to have been identified as *bicknelli* (by Charles Vaurie, in Clafton 1963). This bird was skinned on the island and later sent to Vaurie at the American Museum of Natural History. It was returned and apparently travelled around before being given to a museum (Frank Clafton verbally). After several months of searching, I was unable to locate the specimen and it may now be lost. It is apparently not at the National Museum of Wales at Cardiff, the University College of North Wales at Bangor, nor at Liverpool, Manchester or Bolton Museums nor at the Natural History Museum at Tring.

4. ST KILDA, 1965 Now at the Royal Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, no. NMSZ 1965.59.

5. LOSSIEMOUTH, 1965 Now at the Harrison Zoological Museum, Sevenoaks, no. HZM 1.4878.

Table 2. Details, including wing-lengths, of Grey-cheeked Thrushes *Catharus minimus* trapped or found moribund or dead in Britain & Ireland up to 1994. Existing specimens are indicated in bold type.

No.	Place	Date	Details	Wing-length (mm)
1	Fair Isle, Shetland	5th Oct. 1953	trapped (Williamson 1954)	(chord) 99
2	Fair Isle	29th Oct. 1958	trapped (Davis 1959)	(maximum) 99
3	Bardsey, Gwynedd	10th Oct. 1961	1st-w. ? trapped, died later (Clafton 1963)	100
4	St Kilda, Western Isles	29th Oct. 1965	trapped, died later (Grubb 1966)	103
5	Lossiemouth, Grampian	26th Nov. 1965	1st-w. ♂ found moribund (Harrison 1967)	111
6	Horden, Co. Durham	17th Oct. 1968	dead	102.5
7	Bardsey	31st Oct. 1968	trapped	left, 98; right, 97.5
8	Bardsey	20th Oct. 1971	dead	101
9	Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork	19th Oct. 1982	trapped (Fitzharris 1983)	(longest chord) 106
10	Lundy, Devon	11th-12th Oct. 1985	trapped	116
11	St Mary's, Scilly	20th-21st Oct. 1986	killed by cat	
12	St Mary's	22nd Oct. 1986	drowned on shore	108
13	Lundy	27th Oct. 1986	dead	107
14	Benbecula, Western Isles	29th Oct. 1989	trapped	103
15	Slimbridge, Gloucestershire	14th Oct. 1990	trapped, died later	left, 103; right, 102
16	St Agnes, Scilly	22nd-26th Sept. 1991	trapped	101
17	Loop Head, Co. Clare	12th Oct. 1991	trapped (Smiddy & O'Sullivan 1994)	

Table 3. Specimens of Grey-cheeked Thrushes *Catharus minimus* listed in table 2 which have been remeasured by the author.

No.	Place	Date	Wing lengths (mm) PUBLISHED	MEASURED BY AGK Maximum	Chord
4	St Kilda, Western Isles	29th Oct. 1965	103	104	102
5	Lossiemouth, Grampian	26th Nov. 1965	111	102	100
8	Bardsey, Gwynedd	20th Oct. 1971	101	103	100
12	St Mary's, Scilly	22nd Oct. 1986	108	107	105

6. HORDEN, 1968 This one was said to be at the Hancock Museum in Newcastle (*Brit. Birds* 62: 476-477). The museum, however, has no record of the bird. It later emerged that the corpse had been given to the museum and prepared as a freeze-dried specimen, which was subsequently eaten by a rat (Eric Meek verbally).

8. BARDSEY, 1971 Said to have been going to the National Museum of Wales (BBRC submission), this bird was eventually traced to an outbuilding in Dyfed. It has now been deposited at the NMW, Cardiff, no. NMW Z.1995.014.

11. ST MARY'S, 1986 This bird attracted the attention of a cat. I am not aware of the existence of either measurements or identifiable surviving parts.

12. ST MARY'S, 1986 Mounted specimen in the possession of Chris R. Janman.

13. LUNDY, 1986 Remains of dead bird found, but apparently not retained.

15. SLIMBRIDGE, 1990 The skin was said to have been retained by the Wildfowl &

Wetlands Trust (*Brit. Birds* 84: 485). On investigation, it was discovered that the specimen rotted during a freezer failure and was lost prior to skinning (M. Brown verbally).

Having struggled to get across the Atlantic, at least nine of the 43 Grey-cheeked Thrushes died shortly after arrival. In general, we appear to have been poor custodians of their earthly remains. Observers finding the bodies (or parts, even single feathers) of rare birds are strongly urged to deposit them as soon as possible for safe keeping in the national collections at Tring, Cardiff, Liverpool or Edinburgh.

Identification of the existing specimens

The thrushes which were traced were compared with skins at Tring and the specimens on loan from the AMNH. All four British birds are Grey-cheeked Thrushes rather than Bicknell's. Based on the limited material available, the birds from Lossiemouth (no. 5), St Mary's (no. 12) and probably St Kilda (no. 4) seem closest to *aliciae* and the Bardsey specimen (no. 8) may be closer to *minimus*. The originally published wing-length of the Lossiemouth bird was presumably a typographic or transcription error (see table 3).

Identification of the other trapped or dead birds

Of the 1961 Bardsey specimen (no. 3), Charles Vaurie wrote:

' . . . there seems little doubt that [the] specimen is *bicknelli* because it matches the measurements of this race and also has the same bill and coloration' (Clafton 1963).

This bird fits quite well as *bicknelli* using Vaurie's measurements of Grey-cheeked Thrushes as given in Williamson (1954). Vaurie's measurements seem, however, to be large compared with those of other authors (table 1) and he tended to measure only very small samples (as in, e.g., Vaurie 1959). For these reasons, the other data-sets in table 1 would seem to be more reliable. At 100 mm, the published wing-length of this bird is at or beyond the upper limit for *bicknelli* (table 1). Even deducting 2 mm for the estimated difference between the maximum wing-length (usual technique in Britain) and the chord (usual technique in North America; table 3, see also Svensson 1992: 21), this bird is still uncomfortably large for *bicknelli*.

The published description of the 1961 Bardsey bird does not mention the warm brown or rufous colour now associated with *bicknelli*. The colour of the base of the lower mandible of the live bird was noted as 'horn', which is not a feature of *bicknelli*. On the basis of the existing documentation, identification as *bicknelli* cannot be supported.

The biometrics (only wing-length given here) of three of the remaining birds (nos. 1, 2 & 7) fall in the overlap zone between *minimus/aliciae* and *bicknelli*. The descriptions of the three birds do not suggest *bicknelli*. The larger individuals (nos. 6, 9, 10, & 12-16) are clearly *minimus* or *aliciae*. None of the trapped or dead birds can therefore be identified as Bicknell's Thrush. (A description of the 1991 bird trapped in Ireland was not available during this review.)

Sight records

We can be fairly confident that most, if not all, 'Grey-cheeked Thrushes' (in the wide sense) which have occurred in Britain and Ireland are Grey-cheeked Thrushes (in the narrow sense) of the races *aliciae* and/or *minimus*. This is particularly so for the majority of those which have been described as having grey upperparts. The plumage of occasional individuals has been noted as being more rufous (e.g. one at Abbey Farm, Tresco, Isles of Scilly, on 20th October 1986: Curson 1994, plates 6, 8 & 9). This bird could have been *bicknelli*, but nominate *minimus* cannot be eliminated at this stage. The latter is perhaps more likely, if only because of the breeding range and likely population size. The claims of such individuals will be reassessed when further information becomes available.

Using existing criteria, it is not advisable to identify to species any sight-only records of the more richly coloured vagrant Grey-cheeked and Bicknell's Thrushes (McLaren 1995; Parkes 1995; and this study), *contra* Curson (1994). For a good discussion of identification, see McLaren 1995.

Conclusion

There is no evidence to admit *bicknelli* to the British List on the basis of any record so far. From recent Internet/Birdchat discussions, it is clear that many North American birders are actively working to establish field-identification features for the newly separated species. Furthermore, Dr Ouellet is currently studying the geographic variation of Grey-cheeked Thrush. Until clear and unambiguous criteria emerge, it is unlikely that any claim of *bicknelli* (particularly the first for Britain) will be accepted unless firmly established by biometrics and an in-the-hand description. Given the example of the Lossiemouth Grey-cheeked Thrush (see above), measurements of any rare birds should be replicated independently.

Acknowledgments

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RARITIES COMMITTEE NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rarities statistics

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For the past 19 years, the British Birds Rarities Committee has, for each rare species recorded during the year, shown (a) the total number of individuals recorded up to the year 1957, (b) the total number of individuals recorded during the period from 1958 (the first year covered by the Rarities Committee) up to and including the previous year, and (c) the number of individuals recorded in the current year covered by the Report. Thus, to take Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, for example, the figures are shown as: '(11, 33, 5)' in the latest Report (*Brit. Birds* 88: 534), meaning 11 individuals up to 1957, 33 during 1958-93 and five in 1994. This system was devised by D. J. Britton (*Brit. Birds* 70: 405), who calculated the totals each year during 1976-88; this task is now performed annually by Pete Fraser and John Ryan on behalf of the BBRC.

The Association of European Rarities Committees, at its meeting on Heligoland, Germany, in October 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 355-359), recommended that the number of records *and* the number of individuals should be indicated in such cases, whenever these are different. Calculation of these figures would be very simple for some species, such as Desert Wheatear, for the number of individuals is almost always the same as the number of records. There are, however, enormous calculation problems in cases where the same bird is thought to occur in several successive years or several successive seasons or at a number of different localities in the same year, for then there may be five or ten records but only one individual. Similarly, there can be problems when there is a series of records of small flocks. For European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, for instance, with records of five at one locality, five at another locality and then four at a third locality, this might be five individuals or nine individuals or ten individuals or 14 individuals involved in the three records. Thus, without going into even more detail, the calculations can be quite tricky (and open to discussion in many cases) even with the set of records for one year. Recalculating all the figures for not only the 37 years during which the British Birds Rarities Committee has been in operation, but also for all the records for the period up to 1957 is a very daunting task and one which has not yet been started.

We give this explanation since the BBRC is a founder member of the AERC, recognises the usefulness of the AERC's guidelines and, in principle, would wish to follow them. Many of the published annual reports on rare birds from other countries in Europe have already adopted this system. The purpose of this communication is to explain why that has, so far, been impractical for the BBRC.

R. A. Hume and J. T. R. Sharrock
c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

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MONTHLY MARATHON

The answers sent in for the first three hurdles can now be revealed.

September's dozing wader (*Brit. Birds* 88: plate 126) was named as White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (36%), Western Sandpiper *C. mauri* (24%), Little Stint *C. minuta* (23%), Semipalmated Sandpiper *C. pusilla* (9%) and three other waders.

October's rock-frequenting passerine (88: plate 140) was named as Berthelot's Pipit *Anthus berthelotii* (58%), Water *A. spinoletta* (16%), Tawny *A. campestris* (15%) and five other pipits.

November's paddling wader (88: plate 198) was named as Sanderling *Calidris alba* (76%), Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis* (10%), Semipalmated Sandpiper (7%) and three other waders.

The most-named species was the right answer each time. The White-rumped Sandpiper was the adult at Lisagriffin, Co. Cork, in July 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 546), photographed by Richard T. Mills; the Berthelot's Pipit was photographed by Rudi Jelinek on Tenerife in October 1986; and the juvenile Sanderling was photographed in Russia by Yuri Shibnev.

After the first three hurdles, a total of 42 competitors have achieved three-in-a-row sequences of correct identifications and a further 66 got both of the latest two right. The identities of the two birds providing the fourth hurdle (December's plate 221) will be revealed in the March issue.

The next hurdle appears below (plate 1).

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Plate 1. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 115: fifth stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. *Read the rules* (see page 24), then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th March 1996.

Long-toed Stint in Cornwall: the first record for the Western Palearctic



Philip D. Round

ABSTRACT A wader at Marazion Marsh, Cornwall, on 7th and 8th June 1970, originally identified as a Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*, has now been accepted as a Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta*, the first record of this species in the Western Palearctic. The long process of reidentification is described in detail.

The weekend of 5th-7th June 1970 was extraordinary by the standards of the time, and especially exciting for me. I was still at school and in the midst of sitting my GCE A-level examinations. On the evening of Friday 5th June, I thought that, by way of a break from my studies, I would have a look at my 'home patch', Marazion Marsh, Cornwall. I expected it to be fairly quiet as the weather was clear and settled, and, moreover, the marsh was, at that time, fairly dry with exposed wet mud and surface water restricted to little more than a small puddle at the eastern end. To my great surprise, however, I found a Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*, only the fourth twentieth-century record for the county (Penhallurick 1969). Furthermore, other observers (while looking for the Temminck's) found a Little Stint *C. minuta* at Marazion on the following day, and two more on the Hayle Estuary that same weekend. There were only four previous spring records of Little Stint for the Cornish mainland.

When I revisited Marazion Marsh on the late afternoon of Sunday 7th June, the original Temminck's Stint had gone, but another, small, yellow-legged stint was present together with a Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* showing the characteristics of the ashy-headed race *cinereocapilla*. J. H. Johns arrived at the site shortly after, and both he and I spent about two hours watching the new stint that evening. It was much brighter and more strongly scaled on the

[*Brit. Birds* 89: 12-24, January 1996] © British Birds Ltd 1996

upperparts than the Temminck's, lacked the clear white outer tail feathers of that species, and differed in shape, proportions and call.

On the following day, we both spent several more hours observing the stint, which was tame and could be approached down to about 6 m. During this period, JHJ obtained an excellent series of photographs, both monochrome and colour (see plates 2-5, 8-11 & 14-17). The bird was last observed on the evening of 8th June. During its stay, it was seen by at least seven other observers, including the late J. E. Beckerlegge, E. Griffiths, the late R. G. Hadden, P. R. G. Marriott, the late A. G. Parsons, B. Pattenden and L. P. Williams.

JHJ and I both reached the conclusion that the bird was a Least Sandpiper *C. minutilla*, although at that time neither of us had any experience of any of the rarer stints. Details of the sighting were sent to the British Birds Rarities Committee by JEB, JHJ, PRGM and PDR, and the record was subsequently accepted as the first spring record of Least Sandpiper for Britain (*Brit. Birds* 64: 351).

The possibility that the bird might have been the similar Palearctic species, Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta,* was not then considered. At that time I was unaware of the existence of Long-toed Stint, and none of the three other observers' submissions to BBRC made any mention of that species. Ironically, though, JHJ's and my descriptions both drew attention to the unusually long toes shown by the bird. Further, within only a week or two of the sighting, I met D. J. Britton at Marazion Marsh and he asked me whether I or any other observer had satisfactorily excluded the possibility of Long-toed Stint. My doubts did not really begin to accumulate, however, until 1974, when I read D. I. M. Wallace's ground-breaking paper on stint identification (*Brit. Birds* 67: 1-16).

In autumn 1975, I discussed my misgivings with JEB and JHJ, and JHJ made his transparencies, monochrome negatives and prints available for renewed scrutiny. Comparison of these photographs with skins in the British Museum, consultation with other ornithologists and, finally, experience of Long-toed Stints wintering in Thailand in January 1979 led me to believe that the Marazion bird had indeed been a Long-toed Stint in breeding plumage. I summarised my views (*in litt.* to BBRC, 27th March 1979): 'Of all the features examined here, there is none which unequivocally points to the original identification of Least Sandpiper as being correct. The size, length of legs and toes, and call all strongly indicate that the bird was probably a Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta,* while many of the plumage characters lend some support to this hypothesis. A re-examination of the record by the Rarities Committee would seem appropriate.'

Description

This description is synthesised from the original notes submitted to the BBRC and from those features evident in the photographic records.

Small *Calidris*, appearing slightly larger and longer-legged than either Little or Temminck's Stints. Folded wings did not project beyond tail, and tips of primaries cloaked by tertials. Bill very slightly shorter than head, tapering towards tip and slightly decurved. Toes appeared exceptionally long in relation to length of tarsus, though middle toe not disproportionately long in relation to outer toes.

Entire crown, from nape to base of bill, golden-brown, streaked black. Black streaking heavier and more profuse in centre of crown, so that predominantly blackish central crown









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Plates 2-5. Above, Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, **Cornwall, 8th June 1970** (*J. H. Johns*)
Plates 6 & 7. Below, Least Sandpipers *Calidris minutilla*, **USA** (*R. J. Chandler*). Left, Texas, 23rd April 1994; right, California, 15th April 1992.

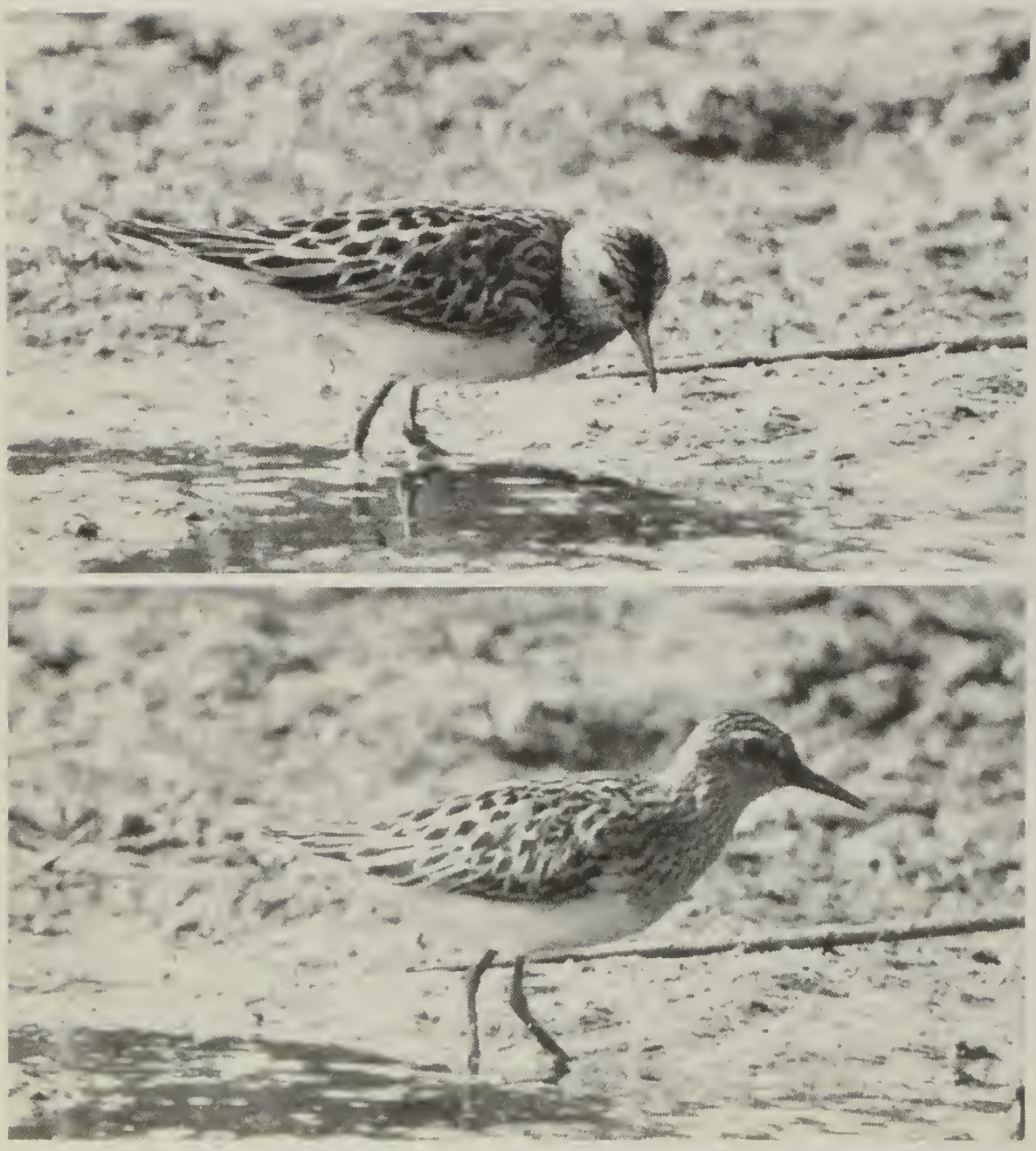






Plates 8-11. Above, Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, Cornwall, 8th June 1970 (*J. H. Johns*)
Plates 12 & 13. Below, Long-toed Stints *Calidris subminuta*, Western Australia, 22nd March 19
(*R. J. Chandler*)





Plates 14 & 15. Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, **Marazion Marsh, Cornwall, 8th June 1970** (*J. H. Johns*)

and forehead contrasted with golden-brown lateral crown. Broad, off-white supercilium which extended from almost base of bill to rear of head, though most prominent above and immediately behind eye. (Pale sides to crown tend to give impression of split supercilium in some photographs.) Loral streak blackish-brown; ear-coverts brownish with blurred, dark streaks. Upperparts strongly and brightly scaled; feathers of upper and lower scapulars and greater coverts blackish, broadly edged with rich, deep golden-brown, and tipped whitish. Mantle finely vermiculated black and brown and edged by thin, whitish V-marking, the arms of the 'V' not quite meeting. Broad whitish line along outside edge of scapulars, formed by the white-tipped feathers. Tertials black, broadly edged deep rufous.

Very distinct, unbroken pectoral band extending across upper breast: ground colour pale sandy-brown, becoming more whitish in centre of breast; streaked blackish, with boldest streaks at sides of breast and extending down flanks, and streaking slightly reduced and less distinct in centre of breast. In flight, tail showed black down centre, with grey-brown outer feathers. Lateral uppertail-coverts white. Wingbar extremely fine and indistinct, whitish. Bill blackish; no pale base evident. Legs dull ochreous yellow.

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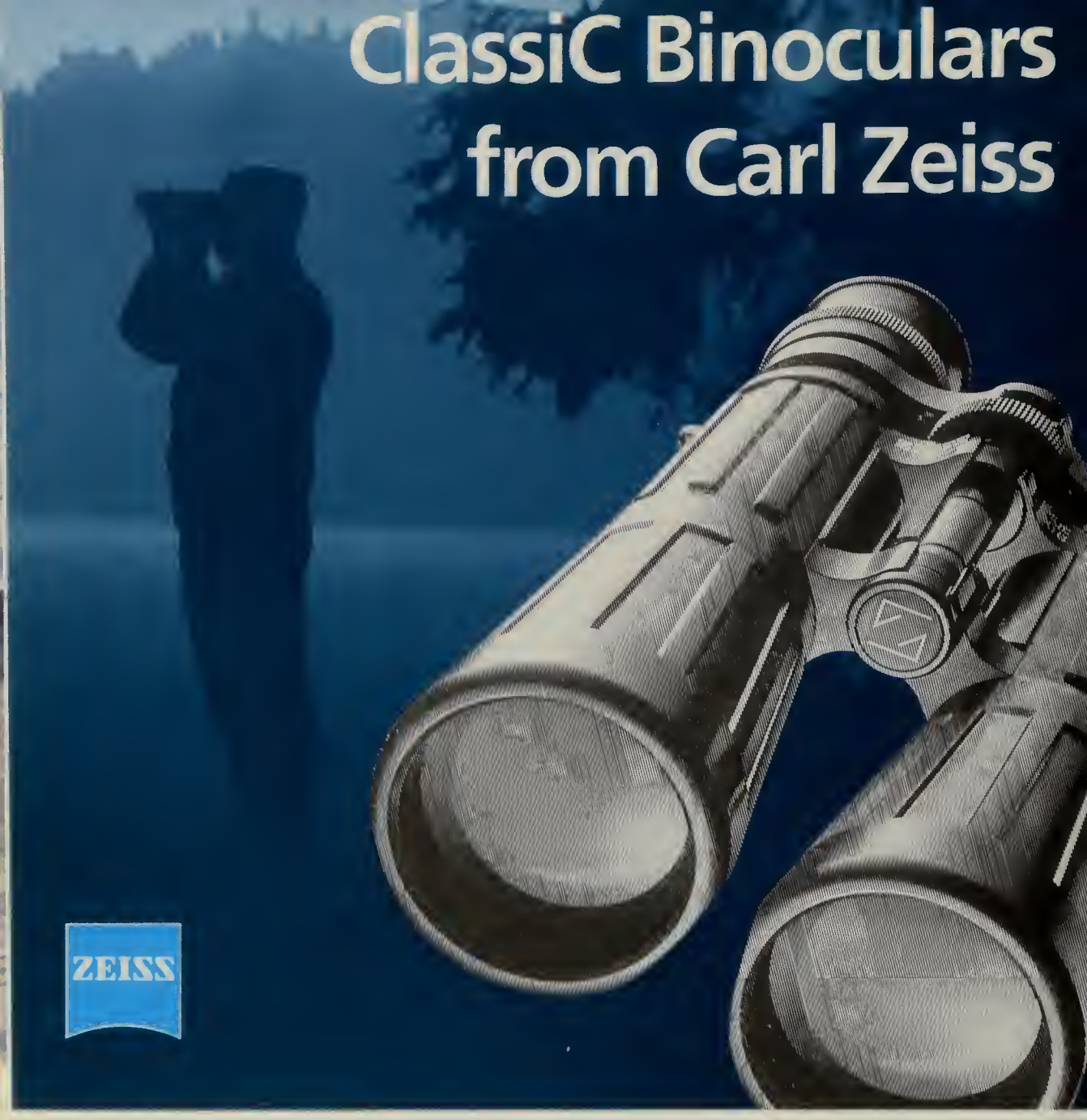
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Plates 16 & 17. Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, **Marazion Marsh, Cornwall, 8th June 1970** (*J. H. Johns*). Note strategically extended left foot, enabling toe lengths to be examined.

Call and behaviour

The call, uttered in flight, was variously described by the three observers who submitted details of the voice as 'a dullish "prrp" ', 'a low-pitched "trrpp" and "chrupp", not unlike the note of a Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*', and 'a trilling "preet-preet" or a monosyllabic "prritt" '.

When flushed, the bird on occasions flew up high and towered in a manner reminiscent of a Temminck's Stint. More usually, however, it flew low over the ground with shallow, flickering wingbeats somewhat recalling Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*. The bird fed around the edges of shallow, muddy puddles, usually employing a rapid 'drilling' bill action.

Identification

One of JHJ's monochrome photographs showed the bird side-on with its foot raised (plate 17), suggesting the possibility of measuring the ratios of middle toe to bunched toes and middle toe to tarsus for identification purposes. Measurements of British Museum specimens of Long-toed Stint and Least Sandpiper, however, which I made for comparison, showed such minor differences in these ratios (slightly greater for Long-toed than for Least) that measurements from the photograph were of doubtful use. More significant, however, was the breadth of the rufous edging on the tertials, which was greater on the Marazion bird than on breeding-plumaged Least Sandpiper, but typical for Long-toed Stint. Suggestions that the bird was too heavily streaked on the breast for a Long-toed Stint have been shown to be unreliable: the range of variation of both species encompassed that of the Marazion bird.

The bird's identification as Long-toed Stint was not finally accepted by the BBRC until 1994, and this was endorsed by the BOU Records Committee in 1995. In the interim, however, three other Long-toed Stints were recorded in the Western Palearctic: at Ottenby, Sweden, in October-November 1977 (Pettersson *et al.* 1978), in Cleveland in August-September 1982 (Dunnett 1992) and at Eilat, Israel, in August 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 8, plate 2). Considering the exceptionally good photographic record of the Marazion stint, it seems remarkable, with hindsight, that it should have taken the Committee so long (almost 15 years since resubmission) to reach a conclusion over what should not have posed a taxing problem, given recent advances in field identification (e.g. Kitson 1978; Jonsson & Grant 1984; Veit & Jonsson 1987; Alström & Olsson 1989). Yet, to put the process in perspective, even as recently as 1982, one acknowledged stint expert, the late P. J. Grant (*in litt.* to PDR, 19th November 1982), stated: 'My personal view is that it was a Least Sandpiper.'

Although the deliberations of the British Birds Rarities Committee have not been made available to the author, it seems likely that the decision to accept the Marazion bird as the first British and Western Palearctic record of Long-toed Stint was made on the following characters, elucidated in Veit & Jonsson (1987) and Lewington *et al.* (1991):

1. Dark forehead (usually a narrow pale area is evident above the base of the bill on adult breeding Least).
2. Fairly prominent split supercilium (less pronounced on Least).
3. Loral streak of unexceptional boldness or thickness (usually more prominent on Least).
4. Prominent broad rufous edges to the tertials, coverts and scapulars (edges usually duller and narrower on Least).
5. Call, likened to that of Pectoral Sandpiper (thinner and higher-pitched in the case of Least Sandpiper).
6. Size, and length of the legs and toes.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the many people who, over the years, responded to my identification queries, or provided useful discussion, support and encouragement, including Jon Dunn, John

Marchant, Roger Tory Peterson, Tony Prater, Will Russell, Derek Scott, Tim Sharrock, Grahame Walbridge, Ian Wallace and Claudia Wilds. I particularly wish to thank John Johns for generously and unconditionally granting me the use of all his photographs of the Marazion Long-toed Stint.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Rob Hume, Chairman of the BBRC, has commented: 'The file began BBRC circulation in July 1970 and completed its rounds at the beginning of August with unanimous acceptance as Britain & Ireland's sixteenth (and first spring) Least Sandpiper. There was praise for the documentation, a suggestion that, as only one member of the Committee at that time had seen the species, it might be wise to send the details to someone who knew it well, but no further comment.

'The record was published as Least Sandpiper (*Brit. Birds* 64: 351). In March 1979, PDR sent a small file of information to M. J. Rogers, BBRC secretary, with a request that the record be reviewed in the light of increased knowledge of the identification of small *Calidris* species. His own view, formed as long before as 1972, was that the individual might prove to have been a Long-toed Stint. Many observers had barely heard of, let alone considered, that species in 1970, but PDR himself had since seen Long-toed Stints in Thailand, in the winter of 1978/79. With the benefit of JHJ's photographs, he had pursued an investigation that foreshadowed a long period of detailed correspondence and discussion that finally resulted in the acceptance of the Marazion individual as Long-toed Stint near the end of 1994.

'It is an extraordinary and salutary tale, with lessons about the value of good observation and description-writing and, crucially, the availability of clear photographs. The patience to pursue developing identification criteria and to review decisions in the light of new knowledge proved vital. It reminds us, too, that identification of variable species with overlapping characteristics can never be

easy: perhaps we should be more ready to accept that certain individuals of difficult species may still not be identifiable with 100% certainty in the field.

'It also allows a fascinating comparison between the "rarity scene" in 1970 and now, as well as examination of the level of research carried out by BBRC members and others. The members included first-rate field men and careful scrutineers in 1970, but such a record in recent years would have evoked several pages of comment and discussion, even given a unanimous vote (and more had there been disagreement). Eventually it did, indeed, provoke many pages of tightly written discussion, with several BBRC members undertaking detailed analysis of Long-toed versus Least characters. Rather than a small group of interested observers, the bird itself would have attracted hundreds of people.

'A recirculation in 1979-81, interrupted by the arrival of further information on identification criteria, resulted in much debate. PDR had submitted his own discussion, together with letters from Will Russell (inconclusive) and Derek Scott (favouring Least). There were seven votes for acceptance as Least, one vote to pend until further criteria became known, one suggestion that it was unacceptable as Least and that the Long-toed proposition should be pursued with further research, and one firm acceptance as Long-toed.

'A further recirculation around the, by now much-changed, BBRC, which began in 1984, resulted in five acceptances as Least, four "pends" and my own suggestion that, as neither solution seemed likely to be acceptable to all, the record should be relegated to "Least or Long-toed" with a published explanation and discussion of available information.

'Finally, the record was recirculated once more around the BBRC, with unanimous acceptance as Long-toed Stint, before consideration by the BOURC as the "new" first record for Britain (predating the individual in Cleveland on 28th August 1982).

'PDR examined museum skins at Tring and saw Long-toed Stints in 1978-79. He felt, then, that the size alone of the Marazion individual ruled out Least: two of four descriptions stated that the bird was larger and longer-legged than a Little Stint and both mentioned the long toes. He felt that it was not, however, possible to measure the ratio of middle toe to tarsus length from the photographs, but, in any case, there was only marginal difference between the two species. The call appeared to rule out Least, which gives, according to WR's letter, a very high "treet", often doubled or trebled. Thailand Long-toeds made a throaty "trreep", deeper than Temminck's (PDR), and DS likened Long-toed calls to those of Pectoral Sandpiper—the comparison made with respect to the Marazion individual.

'PDR thought that the plumage of the Marazion stint—extremely rich on the upperparts—matched Long-toed skins best (these being the more strongly variegated, with brighter and broader feather edgings than those of Least). Alan Kitson (*Brit. Birds* 78: 558-562) mentioned that Long-toed had fine yellow-buff lines bordering the mantle (while skins showed no pale V on either species) and a conspicuous band above the folded wing created by white scapular tips, a feature noted on the Marazion individual. WR wrote that, while it looked unusually bright, he could not be sure that it was *too* bright for a Least. PDR argued that the breast band, previously thought to be good for Least (and, according to WR, "strikingly like a Least"), was, in photographs not shown to

WR, actually paler and markedly less distinct in the centre and that this fitted well with some Thailand Long-toeds, some of which also showed streaking extending onto the flanks, as did the Marazion individual. D. I. M. Wallace (*Brit. Birds* 67: 1-16) suggested that the wingbar was less distinct on Long-toed than on Least: the original descriptions from Marazion stressed the extreme faintness and thinness of the wingbar (although this was not so extreme on Thailand individuals).

'PDR, therefore, argued that no feature unequivocally pointed towards Least, while size, leg and toe length, call and some plumage features pointed towards Long-toed.

'The first recirculation resulted in much discussion, centred upon the apparent inability to exclude a bright Least on plumage, on size (with no other stint for direct comparison), or on toe or claw length when Least also has "long toes", and given the photographic evidence that the outer claws were distinctly shorter than the middle-toe claw (held to be a good Least feature).

'During this circulation, however, information from P. J. Hayman, by then engaged on research for *Shorebirds: an identification guide to the waders of the World* (Hayman, Marchant & Prater 1986), came to hand: PJH being in favour of identification as Long-toed. D. J. Britton decided that it was "100% Long-toed Stint" based on size, Temminck's-like behaviour over many hours (without any tendency to make short runs), Temminck's-like towering in flight, brightness of upperparts (matching descriptions by Wallace and Kitson), strong white supercilium (summer Least having a diffuse one), neck-stretching (perhaps irrelevant, but, if not, in favour of Long-toed), very long toes (longest toe and claw apparently matching tarsus length, and very long hind toe), call and general "feel" (while admitting that claimed differences in claw lengths, bill and breast markings seemed inconclusive or difficult to interpret from the photographs).

'Dr R. J. Raines had recently looked at Long-toed Stints in Australia and commented that size judgments for a lone bird were inadmissible, that Long-toed was actually dark in winter and spring, that the brightness was not a good point, and that the Marazion photographs showed a typical Least posture, not the upright stance of Long-toed. P. J. Grant, using PJH's measured drawings as a guide, argued that the photographs did not show sufficiently long toes, that the plumage was within the range of summer Least, that the strong pectoral band matched Least, and that tentative features—claw lengths and lack of pale bill base—also supported Least: he did, however, undertake to pursue another feature, the relative length of tertial and primary tips. If that was a valid distinction, as seemed to be the case from DIMW's and PJH's drawings (greater projection of primaries on Long-toed), it also supported identification as Least.

'In February 1984, DIMW and PJG spent time discussing various stints, including the Marazion individual which DIMW had consistently supported as Long-toed. Armed with Hayman drawings, he persuaded PJG that the hind toe of the Marazion stint was so long that it could belong only to Long-toed. PJG subsequently sent all the material to Lars Jonsson—who threw his not inconsiderable weight behind the Least Sandpiper supporters. Confusion reigned!

'In July 1984, PJG published an important paper, illustrated by LJ, on the identification of stints and peeps (*Brit. Birds* 77: 293-315), and in August 1992

came the publication of "Long-toed Stint: new to Britain and Ireland" by John B. Dunnett (*Brit. Birds* 85: 429-436), which included a series of instructive photographs. Other useful photographs had also been published, for example in *Dutch Birding* and *Birding World*.

'Graham P. Catley took on the task of researching the matter further and began valuable correspondence, which enlightened the Committee but held back this long-lived file still further as he awaited long-delayed replies and comments from busy people.

'Jon L. Dunn wrote to GPC in April 1992, supporting identification as Long-toed Stint. He had shown photographs of the Marazion mystery bird at the International Identification Meeting in Eilat in 1986 and there was a broad consensus even then: he cited the dark "J"-shape on the lores as diagnostic of juvenile Long-toeds and very indicative of adults, too, and the underlying tawny-buff colour of the lower "face" and breast. Least has none of this colour other than perhaps a little, of a duller hue, on the face. The greater-covert edges are narrower, duller and somewhat uneven on Least, while the contrasting white tips to the lower scapulars were right for Long-toed but not for Least. He felt that Least would probably prove to have arrow-shaped spots on the breast sides, while on Long-toed they would be rounded and more aligned. Also, he thought that some pale greenish colour was visible at the base of the bill of the Marazion stint, diagnostic for Long-toed (although its apparent absence had earlier been used to identify this troublesome stint as Least).

'In February 1993, Lars Jonsson expressed the view that he was now sure that this was a Long-toed Stint and must not be recorded as Least. His reasons, summarised in a rather hurried letter, included: (1) rather low, sloping forehead (Least has steeper forehead to higher, flat crown); (2) a lighter central gap in the pectoral band, with streaks absent from the centre, but more-organised, rather aligned streaks on the rear breast sides/foreflanks (on Least, streaks go right across and are more broken and spotted at the sides); (3) a diagnostic forehead/loral pattern, with a rusty cap reaching the bill above a rather white supercilium, and a dark mark down from the forehead close to the bill curving back to the eye (the "J"-shape, whereas Least has a simpler dark loral stripe); (4) the pattern of the greater coverts, showing a rather smooth-sided black centre, an evenly tapered rusty-orange border and a white tip (whereas Least has a narrower, duller edge and rusty tip and the black centre has a waisted, or hour-glass, shape, thus being slightly scalloped rather than straight-sided).

'Despite the unfortunate delays, GPC's researches were bearing fruit, and Long-toed was heavily supported. By the time of the final BBRC circulation, all this published information and correspondence was available, and by now nine of the ten members of the BBRC had seen Long-toed Stint, eight of them extensively, quite unlike the situation in 1970. Unanimous acceptance as Long-toed Stint rested on a number of factors in combination:

1. Dark forehead reaching the bill.
2. A bulge ("J"-shape) on the loral stripe.
3. Forked supercilium.
4. Apparently pale bill base.
5. Greater-covert pattern (lacking scalloped centres).
6. Somewhat broken breast band.

7. Tawny background to the breast band.
8. Neat, aligned streaking on breast sides, with pale lines as broad as, or broader than, the dark streaks.
9. Rather fine and short bill.
10. Low, sloping forehead.
11. Long tibia.
12. Very long hind toe.
13. Lack of wingbar.
14. Relatively deep call, like that of Pectoral or Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea.*

'How clear it all seems! No-one, however, knew much of any of this in the early debate (although D. J. Britton, P. J. Hayman and D. I. M. Wallace deserve credit for sticking their necks out all along). It is only in the past five or six years that many people have seen Long-toed Stints in numbers in spring (most earlier trips to China, for example, were in winter).

'At the same time, it must be stressed that no encouragement towards overconfidence is intended, even now. J. H. Marchant expressed the view, in the final BOURC circulation of this file, that such a route was dangerous. He particularly noted the overlap in breeding plumages shown by Long-toed and Least, as explained by Alström & Olsson (*Brit. Birds* 82: 360-372), which makes adults much less easy to identify than are juveniles and which must not be overlooked. Alström & Olsson revealed that some summer adult Long-toeds can look dull, while some Leasts may be unusually bright, rarely with particularly broad edges to scapulars, tertials and some coverts. The supercilium of Long-toed can be poorly marked, sometimes as dull as that of Least (which can also have a slightly "split" effect), while the forehead of Long-toed may appear, at least, to be pale from the side, with the dark crown not always connecting with the loral stripe. Further, the dark loral line of Long-toed is less bulging and narrow-centred on adults than on juveniles and may sometimes be much less distinct from the usually simpler, broader line on Least. The scalloped tertial and greater-covert edges, so promising a feature, are not invariably present on Least and there is also much overlap in their breast-band characteristics.

'Keith Vinicombe also stressed that the greater-covert pattern—coming close to being considered diagnostic—must be tested more widely. Several photographs of Least show greater-covert centres that are "hardly scalloped" and too much reliance on one character which may vary is undoubtedly unwise. It is not, perhaps, so clear after all.

'The Marazion record can, however, now be accepted as Britain's first Long-toed Stint: still one of the most highly prized small waders in western Europe.'

Dr David T. Parkin, Chairman of the BOU Records Committee, has commented: 'This record might seem to have had an unreasonable gestation period. As Rob Hume has explained, however, it is entirely due to the complexity of the identification problems posed by this species only 20 years ago. It is remarkable that, in the early 1970s, very few British birders had seen Long-toed Stint in summer plumage, and information relating to its field identification was almost non-existent. Totally contradictory opinions from leading figures of the day added to the confusion, so that the BBRC file consists of dozens of letters from all around the World. Rob Hume's efforts in piecing these together give an insight into the history and evolution of this particular

facet of stint identification. As a result, by the time that the file reached the Secretary of the BOURC, in spring 1994, most of the hard work had been done.

'The breeding area of Long-toed Stint is still little known, but extends from Kamchatka west into central Siberia. Wintering from the Philippines to Australia, it is clearly a very long-distance migrant, and vagrants have reached Sweden, Ethiopia, Kenya, Alaska and Oregon. It is very rare in captivity, although it has been reported. Thus, the likelihood of natural vagrancy is much greater than that of escape. The record was accepted by the BOURC on a single circulation, and published as the first British & Irish record (*Ibis* 137: 512; *Brit. Birds* 88: 512), preceding the Teesmouth bird (*Ibis* 128: 601; *Brit. Birds* 85: 429-436) by 12 years.'



MONTHLY MARATHON



This month's 'Marathon' text and photograph are on page 11.

RULES

1. Only current individual subscribers to *British Birds* are eligible to take part. Entrants should give their name, address and *BB* reference number on their entry. Only one entry is permitted per person each month.
2. Entries must be sent by post, each one on a separate postcard, and be received at the *British Birds* Editorial Office (Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ) by the stated closing date. Every care will be taken, but, even if negligence is involved, no responsibility can be accepted for non-delivery, non-receipt or accidental loss of entries.
3. All *BB* subscribers are eligible, except members of the Editorial Board and staff of *British Birds*, Directors and members of staff of SUNBIRD/WINGS Holidays, and Directors and members of staff of our printers, Newnorth Print Ltd. (Members of *BB* Notes Panels, the Rarities Committee, and other voluntary contributors—including bird-photographers, even if one of their photographs is used in the competition—are eligible unless proscribed above.)
4. To win, a *British Birds* subscriber must correctly identify the species shown in ten consecutive photographs included in this competition. The 'Monthly marathon' will continue until the prize has been won.
5. In the event of two or more *BB* subscribers achieving the ten-in-a-row simultaneously, the competition will continue each month until one of them (or someone else!) achieves a longer run of correct entries than any other contestant.
6. In the event of any dispute, including controversy over the identity of any of the birds in the photographs, the decision of the Managing Editor of *British Birds* is final and binding on all parties.
7. No correspondence can be entered into concerning this competition.
8. The name and address of the winner will be announced in *British Birds*.



LOOKING BACK

Twenty-five years ago, January 1971 was generally mild after the first week. Numbers of Tundra (Bewick's) Swans *Cygnus columbianus* topped the 1,000 mark for the first time on the Ouse Washes. 'About 60 Glaucous Gulls *Larus hyperboreus*, but barely a dozen Iceland Gulls *L. glaucoides*, were reported; about half the Glaucous were in Shetland and only two Iceland and four of the Glaucous at inland localities in England, another consequence of the mild conditions . . . a poor winter for Shore Larks [Horned Larks] *Eremophila alpestris*, with no inland reports and none west of the Sussex coast; the largest flock was 63 at Donna Nook (Lincolnshire) on 4th January.' (*Brit. Birds* 64: 238-240)

EUROPEAN NEWS

All records have been accepted by the relevant national rarities committee, unless marked by an asterisk(*).

Records are included only if they have been sent by the official national representative, each of whom is listed at the end of this report, or have been published in the relevant national journal (these sources are always acknowledged).

As well as covering the whole of Europe, records notified by the national representatives for adjacent countries within the Western Palearctic are also included.

This thirty-eighth six-monthly report includes officially notified records from 37 countries.

These summaries aim to include *all* records of: (1) significant breeding-range expansions or contractions; (2) major irruptions of erupting species; (3) Asiatic vagrants; (4) Nearctic species (excluding ducks, waders and gulls in Great Britain and Ireland, where they are regular); (5) other extralimital vagrants; and (6) major national rarities, including the first five national records even if the species is common elsewhere in Europe.

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to nationally accepted records of single individuals.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*
DENMARK Highest-ever count: 2,500 passing Skagen, N-Jutland, on 2nd May 1995.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*
SPAIN Second record: Irún, Guipúzcoa, 20th February 1994*.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*
FRANCE First record: La Belle-Henriette, Vendée, on 18th October 1985 (recently accepted).
GREAT BRITAIN Hybrid pair bred: one paired with Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* in Cornwall hatched three young in July 1994, two survived to October and one to 1995; also one returning individual from 1992 present in Northumberland until March 1994; one vagrant in Scilly in November 1994 to 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 497, plate 147).

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
FINLAND First confirmed breeding: summer 1995 (*Alula* 1: 94).
NORWAY Unusually frequent in 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 282).

Soft-plumaged Petrel superspecies *Pterodroma mollis/madeira/feae*
IRELAND First multiple record: two, Mizen Head, Co. Cork, on 24th August 1994.

Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma feae*
AZORES Vagrant or possible breeder: single with partly refeathered brood patch trapped on 26th September 1993 and retrapped in August 1994 (*Bull. BOC* 115: 9-14).

Mediterranean Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*
POLAND First record: 20th August 1993 (*Not. Orn.* 35: 332).

European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*
ICELAND New breeding site: small colony on island of Skrúður off East Iceland discovered in 1994 (only two localities known previously: a few colonies on Westmann Islands and one colony on Cape Ingólfshöfði).

Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*
ICELAND Census: 40,000-50,000 breeding pairs on Elliðaey, Westmann Islands, in 1991 (biggest colony in Europe); total breeding population in Iceland estimated to be 80,000-150,000 pairs.

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*
SPAIN First record: Isla dc Benidorm, Alicante, on 13th July 1994 (*La Garcilla* 92: 20-21).

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*
AZORES First breeding record: single incubating one egg (and a damaged egg nearby) at edge of colony of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans* on small islet in September 1993 (*Bull. BOC* 115: 6-8).
CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: at sea between

Tenerife and Gomera in July 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 100).

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*
GREAT BRITAIN Census: total of 60,428 nests counted from aerial photographs of St Kilda, the World's largest colony, in May 1994 (*BTO News* 197: 12).

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
DENMARK Huge increase: none breeding 1877-1937, then from 14 nests in 1938 increasing to 100 in 1943, over 1,000 in 1976, over 2,000 in 1980, over 3,000 in 1982, over 10,000 in 1987, over 20,000 in 1990 and 37,748 by 1994 (for annual totals every year during 1938-94, see *DOFT* 89: 119-134).
ITALY First breeding in reeds: Campotto valley in May 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 64: 168-170); largest colony: about 273 pairs in trees in 1994.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*
BULGARIA Largest wintering concentration: 500-1,000 roosting at Maritza River near Dimitrovgrad, during December 1994 to February 1995 (*Neophron* (1995, no. 1): 20).
ISRAEL Increased wintering: evidence of expansion of wintering range in wetlands of northern valleys: tens wintered 1994/95 in Hula Valley, tens in Zevulon Valley and tens in the complex of Sea of Galilee/Jordan Valley/Bet Shean Valley; breeding also probably increasing, as some post-breeding concentrations (juveniles plus adults) noted in north Israel (Bet Shean Valley, Sea of Galilee and Hula Valley) during August-September 1995, totalling about 80 individuals (until early 1980s, considered to be a very rare winter visitor, following extinction as breeder and winterer in the 1950s).
POLAND First and second twentieth-century records: 7th June 1992 (*Not. Orn.* 35: 158) and adult at Rzeszow on 23rd April 1995.

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*
MOROCCO Third record: Oued Massa estuary on 31st May 1992*.
SLOVENIA First record for 50 years: Medvedce from 29th April to 2nd May 1995.

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*
BULGARIA Successful restoration of colony in Srebarna Lake afer the disaster in 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 264): 12 pairs on nests on 24th May 1995.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
ICELAND Vagrants: three records in April-June 1993 (four previous records; *Bliki* 15: 25-26).

Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis*
SPAIN Vagrant: white morph, possibly juvenile, on 16th August 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 100-101).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
DENMARK First winter record: Åbyhoj, E-Jutland, December 1994.
FAROE ISLANDS Third record: on a ship southwest of the Islands on 5th May 1995*.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba*
BELARUS Highest concentration: 100-200 in area abandoned after Chernobyl accident south of Khoiniki, Gomel region, in mid June 1995.
GERMANY High numbers: 60 records in 1993 compared with 102 during 1977-92 (*Limicola* 9: 82-84).
NETHERLANDS Breeding records: five pairs produced young at Oostvaardersplassen, Flevoland, in 1995.
SWITZERLAND Highest-ever numbers: 115 reports from 18 sites in winter 1994/95, including flocks of nine at Rhine delta on 31st December and at Greifensee on 8th January.

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*
GERMANY Presumed escape: Niedersaehsen on 21st September to 4th November 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 106).

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*
CHANNEL ISLANDS First record for Jersey: 25th and 26th July 1995.
LUXEMBOURG Breeding: pair reared four young in 1995.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*
LATVIA Breeding increase: up to about 8,500 pairs in 1994, compared with 6,000-7,000 pairs in 1985.
SWITZERLAND Poor breeding season: only about 80 young reared in 1995 (usually 200-300 reared).

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumeniferus*
SPAIN Escapes/vagrants: 23rd February to 10th March 1993, and 25th September 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 101).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*
ISRAEL Recent breeding expansion: new colonies along coastal plain (probably tens of pairs: e.g. Hadera area and farther south to Shifdan, near Tel Aviv, where seven pairs in 1994).

Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*
ISRAEL First record since 1984: three adults on northward passage along Arava Valley, in Hazeva area, on 8th April 1995.
MOROCCO Census: provisional total of 223

individuals, with at least 74 breeding pairs, in last two coastal colonies of southwest Morocco in which species survives, in spring 1995 (possibly suggesting slight increase over past few years).

Saered Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*
POLAND First record (presumed escape): adult at Przygodzice on 17th October 1993 (*Not. Orn.* 35: 344).
SPAIN Escape/vagrant: Castrejón reservoir, Toledo, 27th February to at least 17th June 1995*.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*
IRELAND Vagrant: Howe's Strand, Kilbrittain, Co. Cork, on 11th August 1994 (species has become very rare over last ten years; formerly it was much more regular than Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, see *Brit. Birds* 88: 27).

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*
ITALY First winter record: Comacchio valley on 21st January 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 64: 174-175).

Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*
SPAIN Escape/vagrant: at least 5th September and 6th October 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 101).

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*
ICELAND Second record: 10th May to 20th June 1993 (*Bliki* 15: 27-28).

Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus*
ESTONIA Summer records increasing: after first summer record at Noarootsi on 11th July 1993, at least six on Matsalu Bay on 3rd August 1995*. Second record of race *columbianus*: adult at Haeska, Matsalu Nature Reserve, Lääne District, on 16th April 1995* (first was on 10th October 1992, *Brit. Birds* 87: 313).

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*
ESTONIA Summer records increasing: at least 20 on Matsalu Bay, Lääne District, on 3rd August 1995* (cf. increase of breeding records, *Brit. Birds* 87: 3).

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*
FRANCE Winter census: 2,406 or more in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 60-62).
MOROCCO Fourth record: 40 at Merja Zerga on 27th December 1994*.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*
FRANCE Winter census: 269 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 60-62).

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*
FRANCE Winter census: 3,483 or more in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 60-62).
SPAIN Winter population: about 150,000 during winters 1989/90 and 1990/91 (*Quercus* 109: 19-22).

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*
FRANCE Winter census: 106,000 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 60-62).
ICELAND Third record of race *nigricans*: 9th-23rd May 1993 (*Bliki* 15: 28).
SLOVENIA First record for 50 years: Ledavsko jezero on 16th April 1994.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*
NORWAY Fifth and sixth records: 5th-17th May 1992 and 9th-17th May 1992 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 264).
SWEDEN Largest-ever total: 16 in 1994.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*
MOROCCO First record: three at Merzouga on 15th May 1995*.
SPAIN Escape/vagrant: 1st September 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 102).

Ruddy Shelduek *Tadorna ferruginea*
SWEDEN Irruption in 1994: influx started on 13th July, maximum numbers reached on 29th July with at least 29 individuals; numbers decreased quickly during early August, held steady until 20th August, followed by a rapid decline until last report on 1st September; estimated total of not less than 50.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*
FRANCE Winter census: 46,188 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).
ICELAND Third breeding record: pair bred in 1993 (*Bliki* 15: 28).

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
FRANCE Winter census: 41,282 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

American Wigeon *Anas americana*
DENMARK Third record: Geddal Enge, W-Jutland, from 27th March to 23rd April 1995*.
ICELAND Vagrants: three records in 1993 (75 previous records; *Bliki* 15: 28).
NETHERLANDS Vagrant: male on 30th October 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 90).

Chiloe Wigeon *Anas sibilatrix*
CZECH REPUBLIC Presumed escape: adult male in Bykovice, Central Bohemia, from 29th April to 17th May 1994.

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant/escape: Essex in January-April 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 555).
POLAND Vagrant/escape: adult male on 18th-20th March 1992 (*Not. Orn.* 35: 167).

Gadwall *Anas strepera*
FRANCE Winter census: 18,690 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*
BELGIUM Presumed escape: adult male during 1st November to 24th December 1993 (*Oriolus* 61: 36).
DENMARK First record (escape): ringed male at Vejlerne, N-Jutland, on 10th-11th April 1995*.
FINLAND Presumed escape: Ilmajoki on 26th-27th April 1994.
GERMANY Presumed escape: 3rd-13th February 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 106).
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant/escape: male in Essex in May-June 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 555).

Common Teal *Anas crecca*
DENMARK Vagrant of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: adult male at Hov Vig, Zealand, on 15th-18th April 1995* (eighth record).
FRANCE Winter census: 75,392 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).
ICELAND Vagrants of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: male on 8th June and male on 19th June 1993 (41 previous records; *Bliki* 15: 29).
NORWAY Vagrants of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: 23rd June 1981, 16th April to early May 1990, 25th-26th April 1992, 29th April to 7th May 1992 and 23rd May 1992 (eight previous records; *Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 264).

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
FRANCE Winter census: commonest duck, 170,533 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*
ICELAND Vagrants: three records in 1993 (23 previous records; *Bliki* 15: 29).
IRELAND Vagrants: Ballycotton and Loughaderry, Co. Cork, from 26th January to 9th February 1993, and Lissagriffin, Co. Cork, from 3rd September to at least mid October 1994 (five previous records).

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*
FRANCE Winter census: 11,970 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*
DENMARK Vagrant: male at Trillen, Als, E-Jutland, on 6th-7th May 1995* (eighth record).
GERMANY Vagrants: two in 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 85).
MOROCCO Vagrants: Sidi-Bou-Rhaba in early January 1994* and Oued Massa estuary in early January 1995* (nine previous records).
POLAND Second record: male at Zagorow in Warta River valley on 15th May 1995.
SPAIN First record on Balearic Islands: male, joined by a possible female, on Mallorca on 3rd May 1969 (*Ardeola* 42: 103).
SWEDEN Vagrant: Lake Tysslingen, Närke, on 22nd-26th July 1995* (12 previous records).

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Fourth record for Alderney: two males and one female on Longis Pond on 2nd-12th April 1995 (previous records were in October 1970, March 1973 and March 1986).
FRANCE Winter census: 16,828 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).
NORWAY Breeding numbers unusually high in 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 284).

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants/escapes: Leicestershire and Warwickshire in June-August 1990, South Yorkshire in September 1990, Greater London in August 1991, Mid Glamorgan on 7th June 1994 and Somerset on 23rd June 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 555).

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*
FRANCE Winter census: 2,187 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*
FRANCE Winter census: 70,881 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*
DENMARK Fifth record: 26th September and 8th October 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 103).
GERMANY Vagrant: one in 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 85).
ICELAND Vagrants: five records in 1993 (21 previous records; *Bliki* 15: 30).
NETHERLANDS Vagrant: male on 13th-19th November 1993 (13 previous records; *Dutch Birding* 17: 90). Adult male Ring-necked × Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* hybrid(s) in February 1993 and March-April 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 90).
POLAND First record: adult male at Brzeg, Silesia, on 5th-27th April 1995.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*
FRANCE Winter census: six in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*
FRANCE Winter census: 51,880 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*
CANARY ISLANDS First, third and fourth records: female on Fuerteventura from December 1989 to March 1990, three females on Tenerife in November-December 1990, and female on Fuerteventura in November

1990 (female on Tenerife in February-March 1990, *Brit. Birds* 85: 7, becomes second record).
FRANCE Winter census: 2,176 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*
NETHERLANDS First record: male in Walcheren, Zeeland, from 21st November 1994 to 15th January 1995, again from 26th March to 3rd May, and then at Sas van Gent, Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, also Zeeland, on 27th-28th May.
SWITZERLAND Presumed escapes: males on 23rd January to 18th March 1993 (*Nos Oiseaux* 43: 105) and 10th February to 20th March 1995.

Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*
FRANCE Winter census: 2,186 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*
SWITZERLAND Deletion: now deleted from Swiss List (specimens not adequately documented).

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*
FRANCE Winter census: 21 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*
FRANCE Winter census: 46,055 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*
DENMARK Vagrant: male at Bulbjerg, N-Jutland, on 13th May 1995* (12 previous records).
FRANCE Vagrants: three in 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 4) and subadult male at La Tranche-sur-Mer, Vendée, on 11th March 1995*.
ICELAND Vagrants: two adult males from 20th June to 4th August 1993, one staying to 23rd August 1993 (24 previous records; *Bliki* 15: 31).

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*
FRANCE Winter census: 2,195 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*
DENMARK First record: female at Bognaes, Zealand, on 18th June 1995* (probable escape).

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica*
POLAND Deletion: only record, on 31st March 1957, now rejected.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*
FRANCE Winter census: 2,400 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Hooded Merganser *Mergus cucullatus*
BELGIUM Presumed escape: female from 26th November 1993 to 17th April 1994 (*Oriolus* 61: 36).
GERMANY Presumed escape: 9th July 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 107).

Smew *Mergus albellus*
FRANCE Winter census: 206 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*
FRANCE Winter census: 1,161 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Goosander *Mergus merganser*
FRANCE Winter census: 4,219 in January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*
ICELAND Second breeding record: pair at Lake Mývatn from May to August 1993, nest with five eggs found in July, eggs hatched, but young were not seen (first breeding record was in 1990; *Bliki* 12: 27; 15: 33).
IRELAND Population estimates: total Irish breeding population about ten pairs and winter population about 80 individuals in 1994 (breeding recorded in five counties, main population being on southeastern part of Lough Neagh, Northern Ireland).

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*
GREECE Largest-ever count: 850-900 at Lake Vistonis, on 12th December 1994 (*IWRB TWRG Newsletter* 7: 6-7).

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*
FRANCE Range expansion: pair in Eure département from August 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 267) to May 1995*, but no proof of breeding, and single at Hirsingue, Haut-Rhin, Alsace, on 12th April 1995*.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*
CHANNEL ISLANDS First record for Guernsey: 11th-12th May 1994.
GREAT BRITAIN Highest-ever total: 26 in 1994, mostly in April-May (*Brit. Birds* 88: 504).

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*
BELARUS First breeding records since 1950s: nests near Grodno in May 1985 and 1994.
SPAIN Winter population estimate: about 60,000 individuals during winter 1993/94 (*La Garcilla* 92: 42-43).
SWEDEN Increase: population in Scania still increasing, with well over 1,500 in autumn 1994; slowly re-establishing in adjoining province of Halland (over 15 pairs) and Blekinge (about ten pairs).



Plate 18. Dark-morph Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*, **Netherlands, 14th July 1995** (*Arnoud B. van den Berg*)

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*
FAROE ISLANDS First record since 1916: immature in mid March 1995*.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*
BELGIUM First record: 31st May 1993 (*Oriolus* 61: 31).
DENMARK Second record: 22nd-23rd May 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 103).

Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus*
BELGIUM Presumed escape: 21st October 1990 (*Oriolus* 61: 36).

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
AUSTRIA Increase: eight to 11 pairs in Upper Austria in 1993-94 where there was none in 1980; national total of 170 pairs in 1993-94 (*Egretta* 38: 1-10).
ICELAND Second to fourth records: 28th March 1993, 12th-13th April 1993, and 30th November 1993 (first record was in 1944, *Bliki* 15: 33).

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*
LUXEMBOURG Fourth record: 20th October 1994 (*Regulus* 14: 36).
SPAIN Vagrant: Mallorca on 2nd April 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 103).

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*
CHANNEL ISLANDS First confirmed breeding record on Jersey since late 1950s: 1995 (but suspected in recent years).

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*
HUNGARY Breeding records: three pairs bred in 1994, three pairs attempted breeding in 1995 in southeast Hungary, but no young reared due to heavy rains.
POLAND Second record: adult female on 30th October 1993 (*Not. Orn.* 35: 335).

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*
FAROE ISLANDS First record: adult female found dead at Oyrareingir, Streymoy, on 19th December 1994* (record on 21st-22nd May 1984, *Brit. Birds* 77: 587, not accepted).

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*
CANARY ISLANDS First record: Alegranza islet in April 1995.
GERMANY First since 1950: Hessen on 18th September 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 86-87).
HUNGARY Second and third breeding records: pair bred on the Hortobagy in 1994 and in 1995.

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*
MOROCCO First breeding since beginning of century of race *adalberti*: pair bred in north Morocco in spring 1995, following recent increase of Spanish population (*Quercus* 113: 48).

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*
NETHERLANDS Second and third records: 24th April 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 91) and dark morph at Park Hoge Veluwe, between Arnhem and Otterloo, Gelderland, from 13th to at least 21st July 1995 (plate 18, above; first 'resident' record, previous two flying past in spring).

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*
DENMARK Second record: second-year at Skagen, N-Jutland, on 2nd May 1995* (possible escape).

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*
FRANCE Highest-ever total: 183 together at Biguglia, Haute-Corse, on 7th May 1995.
LUXEMBOURG Second record: 7th April 1994 (*Regulus* 14: 37).

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*
NORWAY Unusually frequent in 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 286).

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae*
POLAND Fourth record: 12th August 1992 (*Not. Orn.* 35: 161).

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*
CYPRUS First record: 16th October 1994 (*Ann. Rep. Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957)* 41: 25).

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
CZECH REPUBLIC Increasing slowly: 0-2 breeding pairs in 1973-77; 0-3 in 1985-89; 6-8 pairs in 1993; unsuccessful breeding on tower of Prague Cathedral in 1995.
GREAT BRITAIN Census: BTO survey found 1,283 pairs on territory in United Kingdom in 1991, an increase of 167% over 1981 figure (*Bird Study* 42: 1-19).

Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*
GREAT BRITAIN Census: in spring 1991, considered to be a little over 25,000 displaying males (*Bird Study* 42: 122-131), about double the estimate in *1988-91 Atlas*.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrula alleni*
CANARY ISLANDS Correction: third record was on Tenerife and fourth was on Gran Canaria (*Brit. Birds* 88: 270).

Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio*
FRANCE Recolonisation: two records in Camargue in winter 1994/95 and up to five (two adults and three immatures) at étang du Canet, Pyrénées-Orientales, from 19th July 1995* onwards (all probably derived from re-establishment sites in Spain); could be a future breeder in Southern France.
SPAIN Range expansion: breeding confirmed for several localities in the centre, Azutan reservoir since 1992, pond at Dosbarrios in 1994, and gravelpits at Ciempozuelos in 1995.

Common Coot *Fulica atra*
FRANCE Winter census: 175,368 in January 1994 (thus, commonest waterfowl species, exceeding Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*; *Ornithos* 2: 49-59).

Common Crane *Grus grus*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Third record for Guernsey: subadult on 8th-15th May 1995 (previous record, of about 40 individuals, was on 3rd November 1963).

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo*
FRANCE Escapes/vagrants: 9th-20th October 1991 and 28th-29th March 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 17).
GREAT BRITAIN Presumed escapes: Dorset on 29th September 1975, and Humberside, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Essex in September-October 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 558).
NETHERLANDS First record: 30th April 1993 (1989-92 occurrences now rejected as certain escapes, *Brit. Birds* 84: 5; 86: 282; *Dutch Birding* 17: 91).

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*
GERMANY First since 1983: Hessen on 21st March 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 88).
SPAIN High census figures: at least 170,000 displaying males estimated for Southern Meseta and Extremadura regions, with much smaller populations elsewhere (*La Garcilla* 92: 16-19).

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*
SLOVAKIA Census: 13 recorded individually or in groups on 4th April 1995; maximum population estimated at 30, but no nests found.

Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*
ISRAEL First apparent breeding: male accompanying two chicks near Hadera during August-September 1995.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*
BELARUS First and second records: six near Grodno on 12th May 1994, and four south of Khoiniki on 14th June 1995.
CHANNEL ISLANDS Third record for Guernsey: female at Marais Nord from April to 3rd May 1995 (previous record was on 9th April 1988).
DENMARK Small influx: at least five in spring 1995*.

Avoeet *Recurvirostra avosetta*
BELARUS First record: two at Sudobl Lake, Smolevichi district, Minsk region, on 9th September 1994.
ITALY Breeding census: 480 pairs nesting on Margherita di Savoia salt-pans in 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 64: 183).
UKRAINE Westward range expansion: eight pairs breeding in Lviv region in May 1995 (two in 1993, *Brit. Birds* 87: 5).

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*
ESTONIA Fifth record: two on Is. Sõmeri, Lääne District, on 31st May 1995*.
FRANCE Breeding census: 5,000-9,000 pairs estimated during 1991-93 (*Ornithos* 2: 77-81).

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*
GREECE Fourth record: Gouves Lagoon, Crete, from 31st March to 4th April 1993.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*
CYPRUS First record: 23rd April 1993 (*Ann. Rep. Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957)* 41: 4).

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*
HUNGARY Breeding: pair nested in colony of Collared Pratincoles *G. pratincola* in May 1995, but nesting was not successful since eggs washed out by rain.
LATVIA First record: near Lake Babīte, Rīga, on 3rd August 1995.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Third record for Alderney: two at Longis Common on 4th April 1995, and one there on 5th April 1995 (previous records were in July 1960 and September 1980).
MALTA First breeding record: pair laid clutch of three eggs at Ghadira Nature Reserve, two hatched in late June 1995, and one young still present in early August 1995.

Great Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
UKRAINE First breeding record: four breeding pairs and two nests with eggs found in Pripiat River valley, Volyn Region, on 2nd-4th May 1995.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*
POLAND First breeding record: Gdańsk in 1992 (*Not. Orn.* 34: 376-378; 35: 162).

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*
CYPRUS No accepted records, previous claims either having been rejected or accepted as Greater Sand Plovers *C. leschenaultii* of the Central Asian race *crassirostris* (*Ann. Rep. Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957)* 41: 31).
FRANCE First record: adult in summer plumage at pointe de l'Aiguillon, Vendée, on 21st-22nd July 1995*.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*
BELGIUM Fifth record: 14th-15th July 1993 (*Oriolus* 61: 31; *Mergus* 8: 95).
CYPRUS First records of race *crassirostris*: up to 20 in March 1994 and ten in July 1994; shorter-billed western race *columbinus* is a passage migrant and winter visitor, with 70 reports during the year (*Ann. Rep. Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957)* 41: 31).
FRANCE Vagrant: Camargue on 14th-16th May 1995*.
NETHERLANDS Fourth record: adult on 10th August 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 91).
POLAND Fifth record: adult at Rewa, Gdańsk Bay, on 21st-24th May 1995 (previous records were in September 1961, September 1978, October 1983 and April 1984).

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
BELGIUM First record: 16th September 1992 (*Oriolus* 61: 31).
CANARY ISLANDS Deletion: record in September 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 316) now considered to be unusual juvenile Grey Plover *P. squatarola* (*Ardeola* 42: 97-113).
GERMANY Vagrants: 13th-15th June 1993 and 5th July 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 89).
IRELAND Vagrant: adult at Swords Estuary, Co. Dublin, on 3rd-5th August 1993 (five previous records).
NORWAY Fourth and fifth records: 9th-11th July 1991 (not 1992 as implied in *Brit. Birds* 88: 32) and 11th July 1992 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 266).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*
FRANCE Vagrant: individual in winter plumage at Lillers, Pas-de-Calais, on 15th April 1995*.

Black-headed Lapwing *Hoplopterus tectus*
ISRAEL Second record for Israel/Jordan and for the Western Palearctic: Eilat on 11th April 1995, perched on razor-wire on Israel/Jordan border (first was seen in same area in 1869).

Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria*
BELGIUM Fifth record: 18th April 1993 (*Oriolus* 61: 31).
FRANCE Vagrants: 17th March 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 8), and adult at Vigneulles, Meurthe-et-Moselle, on 22nd-24th March 1995* at least.
GERMANY Vagrants: 7th October 1993 and 16th-27th October 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 89).
NETHERLANDS Vagrants: 8th-18th December 1991 and 9th August 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 91).
POLAND Fifth and sixth records: 5th April 1992 and 25th May 1992 (*Not. Orn.* 35: 162).
SWITZERLAND Vagrant: Utzenstorf on 2nd April 1995.

White-tailed Lapwing *Chettusia leucura*
CYPRUS Vagrants: 10th-31st March 1994, 7th-20th April 1994 and 11th May 1994 (*Ann. Rep. Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957)* 41: 33).

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Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*
MOROCCO First record: single in summer plumage at Oued Souss estuary on 5th May 1995*.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*
FRANCE Second record: adult in summer plumage at pointe de l'Aiguillon, Vendée, on 22nd-30th July 1995*.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*
GREAT BRITAIN First record: Cornwall on 7th-8th June 1970 (August-September 1982 record, *Brit. Birds* 78: 546; 85: 429-436, becomes the second; *Brit. Birds* 88: 512; 89: 12-24, plates 2-5, 8-11 & 14-17).

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*
CANARY ISLANDS Fifth record: Gomera in December 1990* .
DENMARK Vagrant: 4th-9th June 1993 (eight previous records; *DOFT* 89: 104).
FINLAND Correction: fourth record, on 20th-21st July 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 271), was at Siikajoki, Tauvo.
GERMANY Vagrant: 4th-8th August 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 89).
ICELAND Vagrants: seven records in 1993 (38 previous records; *Bliki* 15: 35).
NETHERLANDS Second record: adult on 19th-21st August 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 148-151).
NORWAY Vagrant: Hamningberg, Finnmark, on 21st July 1993 (eighth record; record in August 1994, *Brit. Birds* 88: 33, will become ninth).

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*
CANARY ISLANDS Second record: Tenerife during November-December 1992*.
NETHERLANDS Third record: adult on 31st July to 1st August 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 91).
POLAND Second record: 19th-26th October 1993 (*Not. Orn.* 35: 336, 338).

Peetoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*
BELGIUM Vagrants: 28th September 1991 and 11th-22nd August 1993 (*Oriolus* 61: 31).
DENMARK Vagrant: 24th July 1993 (17 previous records; *DOFT* 89: 104).
GERMANY Vagrants: 25th-27th April 1993 and 18th-24th September 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 89).
ICELAND Vagrant: 16th October 1993 (22 previous records; *Bliki* 15: 35).
NETHERLANDS Vagrants: eight in 1993 (total now 60; *Dutch Birding* 17: 91).
NORWAY Vagrants: Gamvik, Finnmark, during July 1991, first-year at Grudavatnet, Klepp, Rogaland, on 3rd August 1993 (49 previously accepted records).
POLAND Vagrants: 23rd October 1992 and 6th-9th October 1993 (14 previous records: *Not. Orn.* 35: 162, 337-338).
SPAIN Vagrants: 14th September to 1st October 1992, 26th-28th September 1992, 23rd-30th July 1993, 11th-15th September 1993, and 25th September 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 105).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*
IRELAND First record: adult at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, on 6th-12th August 1994.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*
BELGIUM Fourth record: 9th-11th September 1993 (*Oriolus* 61: 31).
FINLAND Vagrant: Pori on 5th September 1995 (nine previous records).
FRANCE Vagrants: 22nd May 1989, 9th-12th September 1993 and 13th September 1993.
HUNGARY Second record: adult near Pely on 16th-18th August 1995*.
NETHERLANDS Vagrant: 12th-17th June 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 92).
NORWAY Vagrant: 29th August 1992 (14 previous records; *Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 266).
POLAND Vagrant: 20th May 1992 (nine previous records; *Not. Orn.* 35: 162).

Long-billed Dowiteher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*
HUNGARY First record: adult on Hortobágy fishponds on 30th April and 1st May 1995*.

Long-billed Dowiteher/Short-billed Dowiteher *Limnodromus scolopaceus/L. griseus*
SPAIN Vagrants: two adults on 3rd June 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 105-106).

Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*
GREECE Vagrant: Evros Delta, on 5th April 1995.
MOROCCO Wintering: single adults at Merja Zerga on 27th December 1994, 5th January 1995 and 19th-23rd February 1995.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*
SWEDEN Second highest total ever: 19 in 1994 (cf. 27 in 1993).

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*
BELGIUM First record: first-winter from 27th November to 2nd December 1994 (*Mergus* 9: 3-19).
NETHERLANDS First record: first-winter on 15th January 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 272) was rediscovered on 20th April at De Braakman, Zecland, staying to at least 26th May (and apparently might not be same individual as that in Cumbria, England, and in Belgium, in late 1994).

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*
BELGIUM Third record: 25th July 1993 (*Mergus* 9: 20-25; *Oriolus* 61: 32).
FRANCE Vagrant: Camargue on 20th April 1995*.
ICELAND Vagrant: 12th-25th September 1993 (eight previous records; *Bliki* 15: 37).
NORWAY Vagrant: Kurefjord, Østfold, on 7th August 1993 (six previous records).
SPAIN Vagrant: 13th-14th July 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 106).

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*
ICELAND Third record: Reykjavik on 19th-29th August 1995* (plate 19, below; first and second records were on 2nd August 1940 and 24th August 1969).

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*
FRANCE Vagrants: two adults in breeding plumage in Finistère on 20th August 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 9).
MOROCCO Second record: Oued Souss estuary on 5th May 1995* (first was in April 1990, *Brit. Birds* 84: 230).

Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*
GREAT BRITAIN Second record: Grampian on 27th November to 27th December 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 517, plate 160).

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*
NORWAY First record: Vestfold from 14th October 1992 to 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 267).

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*
FRANCE Vagrants: two in 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 9) and female at Marquenterre reserve, Somme, from 25th June to 2nd July 1995*.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*
DENMARK Second record: 10th October 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 105).

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*
DENMARK Influx: about 20 individuals (mostly second-years) during winter-spring 1995.



ZEISS Plate 19. Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, Iceland, 24th August 1995 (*Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson*)

FRANCE Highest-ever breeding numbers: 460 pairs in 1995.
ITALY Breeding census: 670 pairs nesting on Margherita di Savoia salt-pans in 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 64: 183).
LUXEMBOURG First record: 4th November 1993 (*Regulus* 14: 37).
NETHERLANDS Increase: at least 225 breeding pairs in 1995 in southwestern Netherlands alone, mainly at Krammer-Volkerak.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*
DENMARK Fourth record: adult at Langli, Ho Bugt, SW-Jutland, on 1st-18th July 1995*.
FRANCE Vagrants: three in 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 10).
ICELAND Vagrant: adult on 8th June 1987 (four previous and two subsequent records; *Bliki* 15: 38).
IRELAND Vagrant: second-winter at Reedy Flats, Lough Neagh, Co. Armagh, on 25th August 1994 (eight previous records).
MOROCCO Fourth record: adult at Oued Massa estuary on 5th May 1995* (third was in 1994, *Brit. Birds* 88: 272).

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*
GERMANY Second record: 8th-13th November 1993 (*Limicola* 8: 41; 9: 91).

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*
ICELAND Vagrant: adult on 14th November 1993 (six previous records; *Bliki* 15: 39).

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*
FRANCE Best-ever breeding in Camargue: 850 pairs in 1995. Outside Southern France: adult at Excenvex, Haute-Savoie, on 12th May 1995*.
ITALY Breeding census: 350 pairs nesting on Margherita di Savoia salt-pans in 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 64: 183).

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*
FRANCE Northernmost Palearctic record: second-year at Boulogne-sur-Mer, Pas-de-Calais, from 15th June to 28th July 1995*.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*
CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: second-winter on Tenerife in November-December 1993*.
CZECH REPUBLIC First record: second-year in Dolní Benešov, North Moravia, on 16th July 1994.
FRANCE Vagrants: four records concerning ten individuals in 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 10-11).
ICELAND Vagrant: second-summer on 5th May 1993 (39 previous records; *Bliki* 15: 39).
MOROCCO Vagrants: first-winter to first-summer individual at Oued Ksob estuary, Essaouira, from 30th January to 21st April 1995* and adult at Larache from 3rd January to 19th March 1995* (16 previous records).
NORWAY Vagrant: fourth-calendar-year on 22nd-23rd May and 8th-22nd July 1992 (12 previous records: *Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 267).
SPAIN Vagrants: 16 in winter 1992/93 (*Ardeola* 42: 107).

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*
CYPRUS First record: one flying with Yellow-legged Gulls *L. cachinnans* at Cape Elea on 5th March 1995.
FRANCE First record of North American race *smithsonianus*: first-winter on 24th January 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 11).
SPAIN First record for Iberia of race *smithsonianus*: first-winter on 3rd January 1991 (*Ardeola* 42: 108).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*
GREAT BRITAIN Highest-ever total of individuals of one or other race *kumlieni/thayeri*: nine in Scotland in 1994, mostly in February-March (*Brit. Birds* 88: 518).

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*
NORWAY Unusually frequent in 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 289).
POLAND Record numbers: 13 in January-April 1993, one in July 1993 and three in November-December 1993 (about 99 previous records; *Not. Orn.* 35: 339).

Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*
MOROCCO First record for Morocco and for the Western Palearctic: adult at mouth of Oued Ksob, Essaouira, on 31st January 1995*.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*
DENMARK Fourth record: 20th October 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 105).
NETHERLANDS Fourth record: adult on 16th December 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 94).
SWITZERLAND Vagrant: immature at Fanel/Chablais de Cudrefin on 26th May 1995*.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*
GERMANY Influxes: 55 records in 1993, compared with 33 in 1977-92, notably inland in January-February and October-November (*Limicola* 9: 92-93).
POLAND Record numbers inland: 11 in January-April 1993 and 18 in September-November 1993 (*Not. Orn.* 35: 127-138, 339-340).
SWITZERLAND Influxes: January-February and October-December 1993 (*Nos Oiseaux* 43: 100).

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*
SWEDEN Declining: breeding population well below 500 pairs in 1994 (cf. 900 pairs in 1971, *Brit. Birds* 86: 42).

Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*
SPAIN Vagrants: two on 18th July 1987 (*Ardeola* 42: 108).

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*
FRANCE Vagrant, but apparently regular in Southern France: adult in Camargue, Bouches-du-Rhône, on 28th-29th May 1995*.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*
ICELAND Fourth record: 14th April 1993 (*Bliki* 15: 39).
LUXEMBOURG First record: 16th September 1993 (*Regulus* 14: 38).

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: West Yorkshire and Cumbria on 3rd-5th June 1994 (19 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 522).

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*
NORWAY First successful breeding: Ostfold in June 1992 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 267).

Inca Tern *Larosterna inca*
FRANCE Correction: influx from 16th July (*Brit. Birds* 88: 273) was in 1994 (not 1995).

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*
LATVIA Third breeding record: two at Nagli fishponds from 24th May to 18th June 1995; second record away from known breeding site: two near Lake Babīte, Rīga, on 14th June 1995 (first was on 25th May 1989).
MOROCCO First breeding record since 1950s: about 20 adults in breeding plumage, with one feeding three fledged young, at Merja Bargha, north of Merja Zerga, on 16th July 1995.
POLAND Population increase continuing: largest-ever colony, with 205 nests at Goczalkowice Reservoir, Upper Silesia, in June 1995.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*
LUXEMBOURG First record: 9th May 1993 (*Regulus* 14: 39).

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
ISRAEL Second record: Eilat on 27th April 1995*, probably of race *meena*.
SPAIN First record: Tarragona, on 3rd February 1994*.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*
GREAT BRITAIN Presumed escapes: Lothian on 24th April 1988, Humberside on 21st October 1988, and Isle of Wight in February 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 538).

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*
ISRAEL Record wintering numbers: up to 17 at Eilat during November 1994 to February 1995 (normally rare in winter, being mainly summer visitor).
POLAND Presumed escape: adult female on 16th August 1992 (*Not. Orn.* 35: 168).

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*
GIBRALTAR Perhaps becoming established: seven on 29th April 1989 and one at another site on 30th April 1989; 'small feral population' in 1990 (*Alectoris* 9: 43, 65).

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*
MOROCCO Fourth to sixth breeding records: recently fledged young at Tafingoult in late April 1994, and at Massa and Ademine in June 1995 (all previous breeding records also in Souss in spring 1990, *Brit. Birds* 84: 7, and in spring 1992, *Brit. Birds* 86: 42, 285).
NORWAY Fourth record: 19th September 1992 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 267). Correction: fifth record (*Brit. Birds* 87: 9; 88: 33) was on 25th (not 24th) April 1993.
SWEDEN Third record: Anderslöv, Skåne, on 16th-18th July 1995*.

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*
SWEDEN First record: heard on Stora Fjäderägg Island, Västerbotten, on 9th June 1995*.
UKRAINE Second record: in Crimea, near Jalta, on 17th August 1976.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: Dyfed on 30th October 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 523).
IRELAND Ninth record and first for Northern Ireland: moribund, Carncastle, Co. Antrim, on 31st October 1994.
SPAIN First record: juvenile died after striking fence at Son Servera, Mallorca, on 28th February 1994*.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*
FRANCE Vagrant: female on Ouessant, Finistère, from 1st May to 19th June 1995*.

Hawk Owl *Surnia ulula*
NETHERLANDS Second record: Brunssum, Limburg, on 2nd April 1995 (first record was on 5th October 1920).

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*
POLAND Fifth record: 1st April 1993 (not 1992 as stated *Brit. Birds* 87: 9; *Not. Orn.* 35: 341).

Little Swift *Apus affinis*
CYPRUS Second and third records: 1st April 1995 and 22nd April 1995 (first was on 28th April 1992, *Brit. Birds* 86: 43).

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*
CYPRUS Vagrants: 21st April 1994, 21st May 1994 and 16th & 24th December 1994 (*Ann. Rep. Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957)* 41: 47).

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*
DENMARK Second record: 29th June 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 105).
GERMANY First record: Hamburg on 19th June 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 96, 185-188).

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*
BELARUS Fourth to sixth breeding localities: 32 pairs near Yurovichi, Kalinkovichi district, at least two pairs, both near Khoiniki and Bragin, all Gomel region, in mid June 1995.
BELGIUM Third breeding record: pair nested unsuccessfully in 1993 (*Oriolus* 61: 33).
CZECH REPUBLIC Increasing in southern Moravia: total of 50 breeding pairs, with 20 and 19 breeding pairs in two largest colonies, in 1995 (best-ever year; three to ten pairs in 1985-89, 20-30 pairs in 1993); third breeding record in Bohemia: 1995 (previous breeding record 25 years ago).

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
NORWAY Unusually frequent in 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 291).

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*
FINLAND Large influx in 1994, but breeding still at low ebb, with only 15 nests with 35-40 young in 1995 (19 nests with 35-40 young in 1992, 15 nests with 30-40 young in 1993 and 11 nests with 25 young in 1994).
SWEDEN Minor irruption from east and first breeding record in Västerbotten since early 1970s: autumn 1994, resulting in at least one breeding record in Västerbotten in 1995 (species now extremely rare and severely threatened by forestry).

Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus*
SWITZERLAND First breeding in Jura: pair in May-July 1993 (*Nos Oiseaux* 43: 102).

Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*
CYPRUS First record: 8th April 1994 (*Ann. Rep. Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957)* 41: 48).

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*
GREAT BRITAIN Fourth record: St Kilda, Western Isles, on 21st September 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 527).
SWITZERLAND Influx: seven records involving 12 individuals during 27th April to 16th May 1993 (*Nos Oiseaux* 43: 102-103).

White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera*
POLAND Fifth record: two males on 12th May 1993 (*Not. Orn.* 35: 342).

Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis*
BULGARIA Fourth record: female near Kaliakra Cape, on 25th May 1995.
CZECH REPUBLIC First record: adult male shot near Zakupy, North Bohemia, on 28th November 1981.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*
SWITZERLAND Influx: 14 records involving 24 individuals during 25th April to 14th May 1993 (*Nos Oiseaux* 43: 100).

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*
GREAT BRITAIN First record: Portland, Dorset, on 2nd May 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 527, 593-599).

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*
SWITZERLAND First record since 1990: 11th-12th October 1993 (*Nos Oiseaux* 43: 103-104).

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*
IRELAND First since 1985: Larne, Co. Antrim, on 19th-20th November 1994 (tenth record).

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
MALTA Second breeding record: pair bred and raised four young in July 1995 (first was in 1974).

House Martin *Delichon urbica*
ICELAND Breeding: pair bred in 1990 (*Bliki* 15: 41).

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*
BELGIUM Vagrants: 27th April 1993 and 2nd October 1993 (*Oriolus* 61: 34).
CYPRUS Vagrants: 17th March 1994, 14th & 19th April 1994 and 18th April 1994 (*Ann. Rep. Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957)* 41: 51).
FRANCE Vagrants: six in 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 12). Spring passage: île d'Yeu, Vendée, on 17th April 1995*, singles at Grand-Fort-Philippe, Nord, on 22nd and 29th April 1995*, and at étang du Canet on 7th May 1995*.
GERMANY Vagrants: 13 records in 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 97).
IRELAND Vagrants: at least 13 individuals, including four together at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, in autumn 1994.
MOROCCO Wintering: 7th February 1993 and three on 7th December 1993 (*Porphyrio* 6(2): 62-63), and five at Layoune in late December 1994 (25th record).

NORWAY Fewer than usual: at least five in 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 291).

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*
GREAT BRITAIN Second record: Suffolk on 4th-10th November 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 528-529; several other earlier records are still being assessed).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: six in 1994, one in January-February, the others in September-November (*Brit. Birds* 88: 529).
NORWAY Vagrants: 30th September to 1st October 1992, 1st-2nd October 1992 and 4th-5th October 1992 (17 previous records; *Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 269).

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*
GREAT BRITAIN Highest-ever numbers: eight in September-October 1994 (45 previous records: *Brit. Birds* 88: 529).

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*
ICELAND Fifth record: found dead on 24th April 1993 (*Bliki* 15: 42).
ISRAEL Overwintering in Northern Israel: one in Bet Shean Valley during December 1994 to February 1995 (winters regularly in variable numbers at Eilat).

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*
DENMARK Second record of black-headed race *M. f. feldegg*: 2nd June 1992 (*DOFT* 89: 105).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
BELGIUM First record: female on 9th May 1993 (*Oriolus* 61: 34, 40-41).
BULGARIA Third record: two males on 1st April 1995 (*Neophron* (1995 no. 1): 20).
CHANNEL ISLANDS First record: male at Rue des Bergers Nature Reserve, Guernsey, on 5th May 1995.
GERMANY Influx: at least six in May 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 97).
GREAT BRITAIN Highest-ever numbers: seven in 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 530).
HUNGARY Vagrants: adult male at Csajtó on 15th-17th April 1995* and male at Palotasi Reservoir on 16th April 1995 (five previous records).
ITALY Possible breeding: male collecting food, possibly for young, near river Brenta, Vicenza, on 15th August 1989 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 64: 28-32). Fifth record: 26th April 1992 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 64: 82).
LATVIA Breeding: at least two breeding pairs again at Jelgav, during April-May 1995 (regular breeding site since 1993), but breeding failed this year.
MOROCCO First record: male in first-summer plumage in Lower Loukkos valley on 3rd-5th January 1995*.
NETHERLANDS Third record: male on 4th-5th May 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 94).
POLAND Breeding expansion: in 1995, 18 singing males in late May, but seven pairs bred later at Rewa, Gdańsk Bay, another two pairs were in Vistula Lagoon, near Elblag, and one at Siemianowka Reservoir; nests found and fledglings seen in all places (first breeding record concerned four pairs at Rewa in 1994).

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
SWEDEN Increase in numbers and range expansion: now fairly common in southwest Sweden and breeding at low density in mountains in the northwest all the way north to Lapland, but strangely completely absent from southeast Sweden where there is plenty of suitable habitat.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*
ICELAND Fifth record of British race *yarrellii*: 25th-27th October 1993 (*Bliki* 15: 42).

Light-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus sinensis*
GERMANY Presumed escape: 27th-30th June 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 107).

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*
ICELAND First record: Gerðar i Gullbringusýslu, from middle of April to late July 1989* (*Bliki* 11: 50-51; 16: in prep.).

Siberian Accentor/Black-throated Accentor *Prunella montanella/P. atrogularis*
NORWAY Vagrant: Vest-Agder on 5th October 1992 (no previous record of either species; *Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 269).

Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*
CANARY ISLANDS Third record: Alegranza islet in April 1995.
FINLAND First record: Kotka archipelago on 27th May 1995*.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*
CZECH REPUBLIC First nesting record in Moravia: Záhlinice in May 1994.
NETHERLANDS First breeding record: five young fledged near Zeewolde, Flevoland, in June 1995.

Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*
IRELAND First record for Northern Ireland: Copeland Bird Observatory, Co. Down, on 4th May 1994.
MALTA First breeding record: pair nested twice at Buskett in May-June 1995 (eggs taken each time by rats).

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*
CHANNEL ISLANDS First spring record of white-spotted race *cyanecula* on Jersey since 1964: adult male at St Ouen's Pond on 13th March 1995.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*
ESTONIA Third record: adult male near Saku, Harju District, on 13th July 1995*.
FRANCE First record: female or first-winter on Ouessant, Finistère, on 27th October 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 13).
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: Norfolk on 18th-20th October 1994 and Suffolk on 26th October 1994 (13 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 531, plates 174-176).

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*
NETHERLANDS Second record: female between Katwijk and Wassenaar, Zuidholland, on 2nd June 1995 (first was adult male at Maasland, Zuidholland, on 3rd-4th November 1986).

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*
BELGIUM First record of eastern race *phoenicuroides*: 28th October 1993 (*Oriolus* 61: 34).
IRELAND Major influx: at least 50 in Ballymacoda and Knockadoon Head areas of Co. Cork, in early November 1994.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
GERMANY Second record of race *samamisicus*: Heligoland on 20th September 1993 (first was also on Heligoland, in June 1864; *Limicola* 9: 98).

Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri*
FRANCE First record: female on Ouessant, Finistère, on 14th May 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 13).

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*
BELGIUM First record of eastern race *maura*: 11th October 1993 (*Mergus* 8: 225-229; *Oriolus* 61: 34).
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants of race *maura/stejnegeri*: 13 in 1994, one in May, the others in September-November (*Brit. Birds* 88: 531).
POLAND First record.of race *maura*: male at Wrocław on 22nd April 1995.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*
FRANCE Vagrants: 1st September 1993 and 16th October 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 13).

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*
CYPRUS First record: adult female on Kourion (Curium) Beach on 19th April 1992.
NETHERLANDS Fourth record: first-winter male on 7th-8th October 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 96).

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*
DENMARK First record: 18th October 1990 (*DOFT* 89: 106).
FINLAND Fourth record: first-year female at Inkoo on 28th September to 3rd October 1993.
GERMANY Vagrant: 29th May 1993 (only one other since 1977; *Limicola* 9: 98).

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*
BELGIUM First record: 5th October 1990 (record on 13th-15th October 1991, *Brit. Birds* 87: 321, becomes second; *Oriolus* 61: 38).
NORWAY Fourth record: 3rd October 1992 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 270; *Brit. Birds* 86: plate 85).

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha*
CYPRUS Fourth and fifth records: Ayios Georgios, Cape Depanum, on 21st April 1995 and female there on 23rd April 1995.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*
ISRAEL First breeding away from Hermon: pair with nestlings at Biq'at Qadesh, northeast Galilee, hatching on 23rd-24th April 1995.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*
FINLAND First record: Kemijärvi in Northern Finland on 2nd June 1995*.

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*
NETHERLANDS Vagrant: 9th April 1993 (14 previous records; *Dutch Birding* 17: 96).

Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica*
NORWAY Vagrant: 4th September 1986 (six other records; *Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 270).

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*
GREAT BRITAIN Fifth record: individual found exhausted at Chipping Ongar, Essex, on 28th October 1994* (taken into care and released on 2nd November 1994).

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: Orkney on 16th October 1994 (42 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 535).

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*
FRANCE Vagrant: singing first-summer male at Ballon d'Alsace, Territoire de Belfort, on 9th-13th April 1995*.
POLAND First record this century: adult near Wolsztyn on 13th April 1995 (about six records in nineteenth century).

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni*
CYPRUS Vagrant: 28th December 1994 (*Ann. Rep. Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957)* 41: 60).

NORWAY Vagrant: second-calendar-year male of race *eunomus* on 15th-23rd April 1992 (five previous records; *Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 270).

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: four in 1994, three of black-throated race *atrogularis*, one in Dorset in January and two on Fair Isle, Shetland, in mid October, and one of red-throated race *ruficollis*—the first record of this race in Britain—in Essex in September-October (29 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 535, plates 170-173).

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*
NETHERLANDS Reappearance: singing males in Zeeland, on 29th June to 17th August 1993 and 19th-21st August 1993, for the first time since 1990 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 96).

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: Fair Isle, Shetland, on 21st September 1994 (14 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 535).
NORWAY Fourth record: 14th-15th September 1992 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 270).

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*
GERMANY Fourth record: 13th October 1993 (*Limicola* 8: 45; 9: 99).
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: six in 1994, all September-October (57 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 535-536).

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*
DENMARK Record number: about 31 singing males during spring 1995.
FRANCE Vagrant: singing male at Le Teich, Gironde, on 15th-23rd May 1995*.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*
NORWAY Fifth record: 28th May to 7th June 1992 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 271).

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*
SWITZERLAND Vagrant: ringed at Yverdon on 5th November 1994.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*
BELARUS Rediscovery: numerous in several districts of Brest region (Berioza, Drogichin, Pinsk, Pruzhany) in late May to mid June 1995, with preliminary estimate of 5,000-10,000 breeding pairs (previously, species was overlooked and/or confused with Sedge Warbler *A. schoenobaenus*).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*
FRANCE Fourth record: adult in Camargue on 2nd October 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 14).
GERMANY Second record: Heligoland on 5th October 1993 (first was also on Heligoland, on 12th June 1864; note coincidence with Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* of race *samamisicus*; *Limicola* 9: 99).
GREAT BRITAIN Highest-ever total: nine in 1994, one in July, the others in September-October (25 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 538).

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
GERMANY Fourth record: 6th-27th June 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 99).
GREAT BRITAIN Third spring record: Shetland on 23rd-27th May 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 538).

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*
FAROE ISLANDS Second record: ringed on Nólsoy on 30th May 1995*.
NORWAY Unusually frequent in 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 293).

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*
IRELAND Breeding continuing: at several sites on south and east coast, including 217 individuals ringed at reed-bed site at Youghal, Co. Cork, in autumn 1994.
MALTA Second and third breeding records: two pairs bred and raised young in June 1995 (first was in 1977).

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*
BELGIUM Second and third records: 3rd October 1993 and 5th October 1993; latter had been ringed at Spurn, Humberside, England, during 16th-17th September 1993 (*Oriolus* 61: 35).
ESTONIA Third record: adult male at Saue, Harju District, from 18th June to 2nd July 1995*.
GREAT BRITAIN See entry for Belgium.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Third record for Jersey: Noirmont on 1st September 1994 (previous records were on 28th August 1979 and 22nd August 1984).

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*
NORWAY First record: Vest-Agder on 14th August 1992 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 271).

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*
FRANCE Vagrant outside Corsica: male at La Londe, Var, on 10th May 1995*.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*
GERMANY Third record: 18th-19th April 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 100).

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*
SWEDEN Spring influx: at least eight in April-June 1995, Seglora, Västergötland, from 30th

April to 1st May*, at Segerstad, Öland, on 7th-8th May*, Trelleborg, Skåne, on 16th May*, Sjömarken, Västergötland, on 16th-17th May*, Ottenby, Öland, on 20th May*, Leonardsberg, Östergötland, on 24th-25th May*, Utklippan, Blekinge, on 27th May*, and Ottenby, Öland, on 13th June 1995* .

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*
CYPRUS First confirmed breeding records: in 1992 and 1993 (*Ann. Rep. Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957)* 41: 79-81).
CZECH REPUBLIC First record: singing male in Mnichovo, Hradiště, Central Bohemia, on 17th May 1985.
NETHERLANDS Fourth and fifth records: first-summer male on 26th-29th May 1993 and adult male on 30th October to 22nd November 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 96).

Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli*
DENMARK First record: 7th-8th May 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 106).

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
FRANCE Second spring record: Gruissan, Aude, on 18th April 1995*.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*
BELGIUM Vagrants: 25th-28th October 1993 and 1st-4th November 1993 (*Oriolus* 61: 35).
FRANCE Vagrant: 2nd November 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 14).
GERMANY Vagrants: Bayern on 20th March 1993 and three on Heligoland in October 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 100).
IRELAND Vagrants: two in Co. Cork and three in Co. Wexford during 5th-13th November 1994.
NETHERLANDS Vagrants: three in October-November 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 96).
NORWAY Vagrant: 6th-7th October 1989 (41 other records involving 49 individuals; none in 1992; *Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 273).
POLAND Vagrant: immature trapped at Darlowko, Baltic coast, on 16th October 1994.
SPAIN Second record: Mallorca on 12th-15th April 1995*.
SWEDEN Vagrants: 29 records in 1994.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*
DENMARK First to fifth records of race *P. i. humei*: 17th October 1973, 1st November 1980, 2nd November 1980, 10th-18th November 1987 and 27th-31st October 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 106).
FRANCE Vagrants: 31 in September-October 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 14).
GERMANY Vagrants: 14 records involving 17 individuals, all on Heligoland in September-October 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 100-101).
ICELAND Vagrants: four records in 1993 (45 previous records; *Bliki* 15: 46).
IRELAND Vagrants: at least 22 in autumn 1994.
MOROCCO Date extension of second record (*Brit. Birds* 88: 277): at Oued Massa estuary from at least 21st to 26th October 1994*.
SPAIN Vagrant in winter: 27th January 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 111).
SWEDEN Vagrants: 48 records in 1994.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: four in October-November 1994 (144 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 541).
MOROCCO First record: Middle Atlas, near Zeida, on 29th April 1995*.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*
DENMARK Vagrant: 20th-21st October 1992 (25 previous records; *DOFT* 89: 107).
FRANCE Vagrant: 20th October 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 15).
GIBRALTAR First record: one with Chiffchaff *P. collybita* on 3rd January 1989 (*Alectoris* 9: 36).
GREAT BRITAIN Highest-ever numbers: 21 in 1994, all October-December (133 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 542).
NETHERLANDS Vagrant: 31st October 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 96).
NORWAY Fourth record: 7th October 1992 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 273).

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*
NETHERLANDS Fourth record of race *orientalis*: singing male on 30th April to 1st May 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 96; now regarded by Dutch rarities committee as separate species, *P. orientalis*).
NORWAY Fifth record: 6th October 1991 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 273).
SWEDEN Vagrant: Ottenby, Öland, on 31st May to 5th June 1995* (six previous records).

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*
SWITZERLAND Possible large-scale decline in 1995: e.g. now absent from woodland in Berne where previously bred in good numbers.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*
DENMARK Vagrant of race *tristis*: 12th January 1993 (37 previous records; *DOFT* 89: 107).
SWITZERLAND Vagrant of race *tristis*: two in Yverdon, from 28th November to 3rd December 1994, one remaining to 7th December.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*
GREAT BRITAIN Population decrease: Common Birds Census data showed 47% decline in numbers in southern Britain between 1986 and 1993 (*BTO News* 197: 10-11).

Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassina*
GREAT BRITAIN Presumed escape: Fife on 3rd-4th October 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 558).

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*
NORWAY Fewer than usual: about six in 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 293).

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata*
MALTA Vagrant: 1995 (ten previous records).

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*
MOROCCO Fourth record: adult male at Meski, Er-rachidia, on 12th April 1995* (considered accidental in Morocco, but is probably occasional spring migrant in southeast; three previous confirmed records involve at least 15 individuals; *Ibis* 110: 462; *Brit. Birds* 85: 460; 88: 42).

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*
NORWAY Influx: 15 records involving 112 individuals in 1992, with breeding at two sites (25 previous records, involving 114 individuals; *Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 273).

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*
ISRAEL First record: Majdal Shams, Hermon, on 21st August 1995.

European Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*
FINLAND Largest influx since 1970s: hundreds in many areas from September to October 1995.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*
NETHERLANDS First confirmed breeding records: 13-16 breeding territories (two nests and two pairs with fledglings) at 180-300 m in southern Limburg in 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 16: 221-224).

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*
SWEDEN Decreasing: after having increased ever since first record in 1965, major decrease in last few years and species has disappeared from several of its strongholds; oddly, the northernmost populations in Östergötland and Närke seem to be doing best.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*
GREAT BRITAIN Census: in 1994, only six confirmed breeding pairs, many fewer than expected, but observed during breeding season at 43 sites (*BTO News* 199: 15).

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*
GERMANY Third and fourth records: Heligoland on 2nd-5th October 1993 and Sachsen on 12th-17th November 1993 (first two records were in October 1854 and September 1980; *Limicola* 9: 102).
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: two in 1994 (38 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 543).
NETHERLANDS First and second records: first-winter on 21st October 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 97), and adult on Texel, Noordholland, on 4th May 1995.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*
DENMARK First since 1989: Vejlerne, N-Jutland, on 26th June 1995* (becoming rarer; 32 previous records).

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants of race *pallidirostris*: four in September-November 1994 (seven previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 543).

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*
NETHERLANDS First record of Balearic race *badius*: male on 6th June 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 97; another at Knardijk, Flevoland, in June 1983*, is still under review).

Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*
FINLAND Irruption: thousands from mid July to end of September 1995, with about 10,000 at Hanko Bird Observatory alone; one of largest influxes this century.

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*
NETHERLANDS First record: Hargen, Noordholland, on 1st May 1995, Katwijk, Zuidholland, on 4th-6th May 1995, and Scheveningen, Zuidholland, on 13th-15th May 1995. (First record since one in Sweden in April 1985, *Brit. Birds* 80: 14.)

White-shouldered Starling *Sturnus sinensis*
GERMANY Presumed escape: 27th December 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 107).

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Second record for Jersey: adult in St Ouen's Bay on 25th June 1995 (first was on 13th June 1882).
DENMARK Influx: about seven during spring 1995*.
GREAT BRITAIN Highest-ever numbers: 24 in 1994 (400 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 545-547).
HUNGARY Breeding: 1,600-1,700 pairs bred at six colonies on the Hortobágy in 1995, with 1,200 non-breeding individuals staying in the area.

White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus*
GREAT BRITAIN Presumed escape:

Grampian in January-April 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 558).

Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*
GIBRALTAR Escapes: two on 24th November 1990 and singles on 30th November and 7th December 1990 (*Alectoris* 9: 81).

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*
FRANCE Vagrants: four males and two females in Antifer Harbour, Seine-Maritime, on 1st-2nd May 1995* (probably ship-assisted) and male at Bonifacio, Corse-du-Sud, on 2nd May 1995*.

Sudan Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus*
GERMANY Presumed escape: Heligoland on 28th September to 11th October 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 107).

Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachydactyla*
CYPRUS First to third records: 22nd-26th April 1994 (*Ann. Rep. Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957)* 41: 73), seven at Paphos Lighthouse area on 6th March 1995, and four there on 20th March 1995.

Red-headed Quelea *Quelea erythrops*
GERMANY Presumed escape: Heligoland on 11th July to 10th October 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 107).
GIBRALTAR Escape: 27th August 1989 (*Alectoris* 9: 43).

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*
IRELAND Vagrant: Mizen Head, 8th-10th October 1994.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*
SWEDEN Unusual numbers: in 1994 and 1995, after having been quite rare for several years.

Citril Finch *Serinus citrinella*
FINLAND First record: 17th May to 2nd July 1995 (*Alula* 1: 100-102).
POLAND Deletion: second record, on 18th August 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 573), now rejected (first record was at Wrocław on 12th August 1975).

Siskin *Carduelis spinus*
ICELAND First breeding record: at least two pairs bred in summer 1994 and raised 11 young in a plantation (*Bliki* 15: 57-59).

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*
SWEDEN Increase in numbers of the race *cabaret*: formerly breeding in limited numbers along west coast since early 1970s, but increasing in recent years, with dramatic expansion, with breeding inland in several areas in 1994; northernmost breeding record was near Stockholm and considerable numbers occurred as far north as Västerbotten in autumn 1994; 'now coming into contact with nominate subspecies on a large scale and it will be interesting to see what happens'.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*
NORWAY Fewer than usual: only six in 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 295).

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*
ICELAND First breeding record: nest with three newly hatched young found on 12th December 1994 but all the young were found dead one week later (*Bliki* 15: 59-60).

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*
FRANCE Vagrant: male in Camargue on 19th-21st April 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 15).
GIBRALTAR Third and fourth records: male on 23rd April 1989 and two males and a female on 13th May 1989 (*Alectoris* 9: 42).

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*
FRANCE Establishment: 12 singing males in Haut-Jura in spring 1995, 12 more in Haut-Doubs, three in Alsace, but only four or five in Pas-de-Calais; singing male at Chausey Island, Manche, at beginning of June 1995*.
NETHERLANDS Colonisation: after eight or fewer records per year up to 1986, total of 39 in 1987, including the first breeding record (*Dutch Birding* 17: 97).
SPAIN Fourth record: juvenile on 23rd September 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 111).

Pallas's Rosefinch *Carpodacus roseus*
DENMARK Escape: male ringed at Klitmoller, W-Jutland, on 28th March 1993 (previous record, in October 1987, also regarded as escape; *DOFT* 89: 107).

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator*
GERMANY Vagrant: Heligoland on 2nd May 1993 (third since 1977; *Limicola* 7: 160; 9: 104).
NORWAY Invasions in autumn 1992 and again in autumn 1993 and winter 1993/94, most marked in southern Nordland and Nord-Trondelag, with many flocks of up to 70 and one flock of 125 in 1993.

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus*
DENMARK Presumed escape: 28th-29th April 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 107).
GREAT BRITAIN Presumed escape: Suffolk on 21st April 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 558).

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: Dyfed in October-November 1994 and Avon in mid November 1994 (18 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 548).
ICELAND Vagrant: 25th September 1993 (eight previous records; *Bliki* 15: 49).

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: East Sussex in mid December 1994 (31 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 548).

Song Sparrow *Zonotrichia melodia*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: Merseyside in mid October 1994 (six previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 548).

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*
DENMARK First record: 13th December 1980 (*DOFT* 89: 107, 109).
SWEDEN First record: Marstrand, Bohuslän, on 15th April 1995*.

Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*
SPAIN Small influx to northern coast: minimum of eight at five sites between 19th September and 31st October 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 111).

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant/escape: first-winter male in Greater Manchester from 8th March to 24th April 1994* (identification accepted, but origin still being investigated; *Brit. Birds* 88: 550-551, plate 128).
NETHERLANDS Second record: first-winter male on 28th October 1993 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 98).

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*
GREAT BRITAIN Highest-ever total: five in Northern Isles in October-November 1994 (24 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 551).

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*
DENMARK Second record: ringed at Blåvandshuk, W-Jutland, on 10th June 1995*.
NETHERLANDS Fifth record: at Hoogerheide, Noordbrabant, on 13th March 1995.

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*
LUXEMBOURG Vagrant: adult male trapped at Lintgen on 4th April 1995.

House Bunting *Emberiza striolata*
MOROCCO Southwards range extension: reported from city of Layoune in early January 1995.

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea*
CYPRUS Vagrant: 18th April 1994 (*Ann. Rep. Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957)* 41: 75).

Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia*
NETHERLANDS Second record: male on Ameland, Friesland, on 10th May 1994, probably present since 7th May 1994 (first was female on 11th October 1859).

Yellow-throated Bunting *Emberiza elegans*
FRANCE Escape/vagrant: Ouessant, Finistère, on 13th-18th April 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 18).
GERMANY Presumed escape: Heligoland on 1st-5th June 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 107).

Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*
GREAT BRITAIN Fourth record: Scilly on 19th-22nd October 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 551, plate 190).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*
BULGARIA Second record: male near Krichin on 21st October 1990 (*Neophron* (1995, no. 1): 18).

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*
MOROCCO First record: Agadir on 21st October 1994*.
NORWAY Fewer than usual: only five in 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 17(5): 296).

Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants/escapes: Shetland on 9th-13th July (not June as previously published) 1974 and 2nd-5th September 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 556).

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*
DENMARK Fourth record: 10th June 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 108).

Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*
NETHERLANDS Third record: singing male at Slikken van de Heen, Zeeland, on 2nd June 1995*.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*
CZECH REPUBLIC Second and third records: adult male shot at Stružnice, North Bohemia, on 27th May 1979, and adult male singing at Jestřebí, North Bohemia, on 18th June 1994.
HUNGARY First record: singing male at Kömlö on 23rd June 1995*.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*
GERMANY Escape/vagrant: Niedersachsen on 28th September 1993 (*Limicola* 9: 107).
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: first-winter male in Humberside on 5th-6th November 1991 (22 other records; *Brit. Birds* 88: 555).

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bird Photograph of the Year

Canon We are delighted to announce that in 1996 this annual competition will once again be sponsored by Canon (UK) Ltd.

Entrants should read the rules carefully (see *Brit. Birds* 84: 36, or write for a copy).

The prizes in 1996 will be as follows: FIRST PRIZE engraved salver plus *Canon* products of the winner's choice to the value of £500 plus cheque for £100; SECOND PRIZE *Canon* products to the value of £200 plus cheque for £40; THIRD PRIZE *Canon* products to the value of £100 plus cheque for £25.

The three winners will also receive £25-worth of bird books presented by *HarperCollins Publishers*.

An additional prize of a cheque for £100 is presented by *Windrush Photos* for the highest-placed photograph submitted by an entrant aged 21 years or under (please state date of birth if eligible).

The judging panel will consist of Dr R. J. Chandler, Robin Chittenden, Rob Hume and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

Past winners of this competition have been Michael C. Wilkes (1977), Peter Lowes (1978), Dr Edmund C. Fellowes (1979), Don Smith (1980), Richard T. Mills (1981), Dennis Coutts (1982), David M. Cottridge (1983), John Lawton Roberts (1984), C. R. Knights (1985), Alan Moffett (1986), Dr Kevin Carlson (1987), Bob Glover (1988 & 1992), Hanne Eriksen (1989 & 1990), Philip Perry (1991), Alan Williams (1993 & 1994) and Mike Lane (1995).

The closing date for entries is 31st January 1996. Transparencies should be clearly marked 'Bird Photograph of the Year' and sent to Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Photographs and drawings may be for sale

Many of the photographers and artists whose pictures appear in *British Birds* welcome the opportunity to sell their work. Anyone who wishes to obtain either photographic prints or original drawings is welcome to write (making an enquiry about availability, making an appropriate offer, or seeking the price) to the photographer or artist concerned, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ. We shall forward all such letters as a service to our readers and contributors.

Bird Illustrator of the Year

Pica Press
and
T. & A. D. Poyser

This annual competition is now co-sponsored by the natural-history publishers *Pica Press* and *T. & A. D. Poyser.*

Apart from the important change in exact dimensions of the set of four drawings (see *Brit. Birds* 88: 564), the rules are the same as in previous years. Copies are available on request (send a SAE to Mrs Sheila Cobban at the address below).

The top three artists will each be able to select five books from each of the *Pica Press*, *T. & A. D. Poyser* and *Academic Press* lists (a total of 15 books each). In addition, the winner will receive an engraved salver and a cheque for £100, the second-placed artist will receive £40 and the third-placed £25. The top artist aged under 21 years on the closing date of 15th March 1996 will receive The Richard Richardson Award (an inscribed book and a cheque to the total value of £60); this award is in memory of the famous Norfolk bird-artist the late Richard Richardson. A single drawing of high individual merit will be selected for The PJC Award, which is presented annually in memory of Pauline Jean Cook; the winner holds the trophy for 12 months and also receives an inscribed book.

The judging panel will comprise Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris, Bruce Pearson, Keith Shackleton and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

The closing date is 15th March 1996. The full rules may be obtained from, and entries should be sent to, Bird Illustrator of the Year, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Front-cover designs for sale

The original unframed drawings of the pictures on the front cover of *BB* are for sale each month in a postal auction. The pictures are usually 1½ or two times the published size. These sales help not only the artists, but also *BB*, since the artists donate 20% to the journal. It is also a way for *BB* readers to acquire—for themselves or as a present for a friend—top-class art at very reasonable prices. During the past year, successful postal bids have ranged from £82 to £110, and the average has been £98. Why not send in your bid each month? If you are successful (if your bid is the highest, and it exceeds the artist's reserve price), you will be asked to pay the sum you bid, plus £1.50 for postage and packing. Send your name, address and telephone number and your bid (no money at this stage), to arrive before the last day of the month, to Cover Bid, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Rarities Reports

A few copies of the annual reports of the British Birds Rarities Committee, which are always crammed with colour photos of rarities, are available for past years: 1994 £9, 1993 £8, 1992 £8, 1991 £5, 1990 £5 and 1989 £5.

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British Birds and *Carl Zeiss Ltd*, sponsors of the British Birds Rarities Committee, are jointly continuing to offer free annual subscriptions to *British Birds* to all the County/Regional Recorders, as our way of saying 'Thank you' to them for the hard work which they contribute to British ornithology in their 'free time'.

Exclusive reduced-price offers

It is worthwhile scanning the British BirdShop pages *every* month because there are always new special reduced-price book offers available for *BB* subscribers. All books are sent POST FREE anywhere in the World. British BirdShop is on pages xi & xii this month.



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott
Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Tim Cowley rescued

After being held hostage for nearly four months by the guerilla group La Cordinadora de la Guerilla 'Simon Bolivar', *BB* subscriber Timothy Cowley was rescued on 8th December by a special antikidnapping unit of the Colombian police.

Welcome back Tim!

Ever since his abduction on 12th August, we had been in constant touch with the Press Office at the Foreign Office in London, but were requested to give no publicity to the kidnapping.

The foreign Press had covered the story since August, but the British strategy was to underplay the event. The lack of widespread public outcry successfully persuaded the guerillas that the chances of receiving a large ransom payment were slim. This play-it-cool policy paid off.

Tim Cowley was held captive at around 3,000 m in the Upper Río Toche, high in the Quebrada de San José. He was well treated, and his captors even allowed him to use his binoculars for birdwatching. As a result, Tim recorded 88 species while held hostage, including 29 personal 'lifers' and six species new to the region. Highlights included Tolima Dove *Leptotila conoveri*, Olive-headed Brush-finch *Atlapetes flaviceps*, a flock of 40-50 Golden-plumed Parakeets *Leptosittaca branickii* and two groups of Yellow-eared Parrots *Ognorhynchus icterotis*. Tim also kept detailed records of the feeding patterns of hummingbirds, but unfortunately all his notes were lost when he was rescued.

Now, he plans to spend as much time as possible with his family.

Red Kites in '95

The Welsh Kite Watchers' Group located 142 territorial pairs of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* in summer 1995, of which 122 were proved to breed, and 76 successful pairs reared 115 young. There were probably fewer than ten additional pairs which were not located. (The 1994 totals were 136 territorial pairs, of which 111 were known to breed, 70 pairs rearing 99 young.)

A female found recently dead on 19th September 1995 in the Welsh kite breeding area was a 1993 juvenile from the English re-establishment scheme; there was also one previous instance of an English-released juvenile kite spending its first summer in central Wales, but then returning to its English 'home' to breed, and a 1993 juvenile from the Scottish re-establishment site spent the first half of 1994 in Clwyd, outside the normal range of Welsh breeding kites, though it consorted with another immature which was presumably of Welsh stock. (*Contributed by Peter Davis*)

In Scotland, the exciting news is that in 1995 the Red Kites had their best breeding season so far, with 26 young raised. Not only that, but three pairs were made up of kites themselves born in Scotland, including one male that was Scotland's first born in 1992. Meanwhile, in England, at least 23 pairs produced 53 young.

This good news is still tempered by the continuation of illegal persecution in some areas, particularly in the form of poisoned bait, and to date six released Red Kites are known to have succumbed to this shameful practice, while another has been found shot. Egg-collecting is still considered an additional limiting influence on the expansion of the Welsh population. Perhaps this makes the good news all the more extraordinary.

[The progress of the re-establishment programme at sites in southern England, central England and Scotland will be the subject of a paper planned for a future issue of *British Birds*.]

Travel insurance for birdwatchers

A new travel insurance scheme has been designed especially to suit birdwatchers' needs.

The birder who formulated the scheme has commented: 'Instead of the issuing agents taking the lion's share of the profits, I thought it was time that ornithology and conservation should benefit.'

On these new policies, the issuer—Richardson Hosken Ltd—has promised to donate 5% of all premiums to BirdLife International. The benefits (e.g. additional cover for optical equipment) are designed to suit birdwatchers' requirements.

If you want to learn more, write to Richardson Hosken Ltd, 36 High Street, Ashford, Kent TN24 8TE, or phone Shaun Hardwick on 01233-635631.

'The Game Conservancy Review'

There are some publications that rarely find their way into the hands of your 'average birder'. We rather suspect that *The Game Conservancy Review of 1994* is just such a one. Yet it is full of fascinating reading, the results of original ornithological fieldwork, all presented in a very readable fashion. There may even be duplication of effort amongst different bodies, and some of the ornithological organisations should perhaps look to the 'Game Conservancy' for information that has been gathered, rather than thinking of undertaking research themselves.

One of the most exciting projects is taking place at Loddington, Leicestershire, where a 316-ha mixed farm is being managed with the aim of demonstrating profitable farming linked with game conservation and all the attendant benefits to wildlife in general. Other sections of the *Review* deal with the subject of predator management and its effect on songbirds, Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* populations in Sussex during 1970-94, partridges (*Perdix* and *Alectoris*) and how to count them, an update on Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* research, and a raptor-study project investigating the relationship between birds of prey and Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*.

A totally fascinating read, the *Review* is published by The Game Conservancy Trust, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 1EF.

Adam Watson honoured

Our congratulations go to Dr Adam Watson, the eminent ecologist and Highlands conservationist, who has been awarded the RSPB's most prestigious award—The RSPB Medal—in recognition of his outstanding contributions to wildlife conservation. He is particularly renowned for his wide-ranging interest in every aspect of the life and ecology of the Cairngorms, and probably knows this fragile and priceless part of our natural heritage (and its birds) better than any living person.

'BoP'

Not in this case a Bird-of-Prey, but *Birds of Plymouth*, a new avifauna, published by the Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society, devoted to the 80-km^2 area of the City of Plymouth during 1950-94. This 150-page paperback, compiled by Vic Tucker, devotes 23 pages to introductory sections describing the area and its ornithological activities, the remainder comprising a very thorough systematic list: well designed, with clear headings and useful status summaries. Scattered drawings by David Bird enhance the appearance. Copies are available (price £7.50 plus £1.00 p&p) from Mrs S. Tucker, Periglis, 4 Clovelly View, Turnchapel, Plymouth PL9 9SY.

Seabird atlas launch

The clear message from the recent launch of *An Atlas of Seabird Distribution in North-west European Waters* was that the oil industry and ornithologists are working very well together, and that respect is mutual. Some of the media representatives present at the reception in London clearly expected (perhaps even hoped for) some newsworthy conflict. We, however, are happy to report good news. The offshore oil and gas industries are not only supporting the research into numbers and distribution of seabirds at sea, but appear to be willing to accept its findings with very good grace, even when these place restrictions on future developments.

Competition time in Fife

The Fife Bird Club seems to go in for competitions. Recent winners and contenders include Mark Oksien (photographic competition winner, for his shot of Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* at Elie in September 1994, *Brit. Birds* 88: 543), Stuart Rivers (mystery photographs winner at the Scottish Bird Fair) and David Ogilvie (who is hoping that his Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* will enable him to claim the prize as the finder of Fife's rarest bird of the year).

For details of the lively Fife Bird Club, contact Rab Shand, 33 Liddle Drive, Bo'ness, Central EH51 0PA; phone 01506-825101.

Jubilation

A letter recently received from Eric Simms: 'I have pleasure in enclosing my subscription for 1996. You may be interested to know that I have now subscribed to *British Birds* without a break for 50 years. I also have in my possession copies from 1st August 1936 to 1st March 1940, kindly given to me at the time by the late Col. Richard Meinertzhagen.'

Guy Mountfort 90

We send belated congratulations and best wishes to Honorary Subscriber Guy Mountfort, who celebrated his ninetieth birthday on 4th December.

Rare birds on RSPB reserves

Every so often, the RSPB reviews the population levels, in relation to the national populations, of some of the UK's rarest breeding birds (the Red Data Birds) on its 136 reserves. There are currently 13 species of which over 30% of the breeding population is on RSPB reserves. There is only one (not to be mentioned for security reasons) that reaches 100%, but several reach high figures. Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* 81%, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* 80%, Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* 68%, Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* 65%, Garganey *Anas querquedula* 58% and Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* 56% are amongst the most notable. There are a further 13 species with over 10% of the UK population, including Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* with 22% and Crested Tit *Parus cristatus* with 11%.

Sedge Warblers in rape

Keith Bowey is researching the use of rape crops by Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and other birds. Anyone with relevant information is requested to send details to Keith Bowey, 3 Alloy Terrace, Highfield, Rowlands Gill, Tyne & Wear NE39 2ND.

Harrier ID

The bulk of the October 1995 issue of the German journal *Limicola* is devoted to a 43-page paper by Jan Lontkowski on the separation of Hen *Circus cyaneus*, Montagu's *C. pygargus* and Pallid Harriers *C. macrourus*, illustrated with paintings by Michal Skakuj and numerous colour photographs (*Limicola* 9: 233-275).

The address of *Limicola* is Über dem Salzgraben 11, OT Drüber, D-37574 Einbeck, Germany.

Tony and Elsie

It is amazing how gossip and rumour linger on. To put the record straight, this is the true story of Tony Soper and 'Elsie' ('LC', the Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* of the Farne Islands, Northumberland).

Back in 1985, I was working with Tony on an edition of BBC 1's 'Birdwatch' programme from the Farnes. We had recorded a number of excellent sequences for placing within the live transmissions. One was of the colony of Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* on Brownsman (impossible for us to transmit live from there), including a shot of 'Elsie'. We decided to keep the shot in, as a sort of teaser to the well-informed birders who might be watching the programme. Because the bulk of our audience would have no specialist knowledge of birds, we decided, however, that the full story about the tern was too complex to tell over just one shot and, therefore, let it pass without comment. We wondered then how many birders would tick 'Elsie' off their TV screens.

Much to our surprise, very soon after transmission, we heard reports that Tony Soper had failed to spot the Lesser Crested Tern: 'Didn't he know it was there?', 'How could he have missed it?', etc., etc. Since then, the gossip has continued, on and off, and has even been alluded to in print (*Not BB*, 1986, p. 8).

Tony and I have had many a chuckle over the whole affair, but now you know the truth. (*Contributed by Robin Prytherch*)

1995 records

If you have not already done so, now is the time to submit all your relevant 1995 records. The names and addresses of the County/ Regional Recorders were listed in 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 55-57) and updating amendments are given periodically in 'News and comment'.

Rare breeding birds

Observers with any outstanding information on rare breeding birds in Britain in 1995 are requested to send full details *now* to the relevant county bird recorder (or to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel's Secretary, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN).

New Recorder

Greg Conway, Tregenna, Cooksland, Bodmin, Cornwall PL31 2AR, has taken over from Stanley Christophers as Recorder for Cornwall.

Frank joins the Team

We welcome Frank Gribble—President of the Shropshire Ornithological Society, Vice-President of the West Midland Bird Club and a member of the MAFF North Mercia Advisory Panel—to the 'N & c' Regional News Team.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

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Don Taylor—*Southeast*
Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*
John Wilson—*Northwest*



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 13th November to 17th December 1995. These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* Immature, perhaps first-winter, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City (Co. Galway), 18th November to at least 16th December (if accepted, will be first for Ireland).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Two, North Slob (Co. Wexford), a few days from 21st November; Musselburgh (Lothian), 26th November.

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* Weldrake Ings (North Yorkshire), 11th December.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* St Kilda (Western Isles), 14th November; near Blennerville (Co. Kerry), 18th November to 16th December.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* Ogston Reservoir (Derbyshire), 14th-16th December; Droitwich (Worcestershire), 16th December (perhaps same individual).

Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* Near Swansea (West Glamorgan), 21st-22nd November (if accepted, will be first for Western Palearctic).

Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota* Dunmore Head (Co. Kerry), 16th November (if accepted, will be first for Ireland); Tresco (Scilly), 4th-5th December.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* Male, Garryvoe (Co. Cork), 26th-27th November.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* Red Mires Reservoir (South Yorkshire), black-throated race *atrogularis*, 13th November.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* About 60 in November, half of which were in Shetland; at least another 30 in December mostly on English east coast; about 15 inland in England.

Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides* Blackpool (Lancashire), about 24th November (unknown origin; taken into care 1st December, released on 2nd, when last seen).

Rare Bird News supplies all its information free to 'British Birds'.
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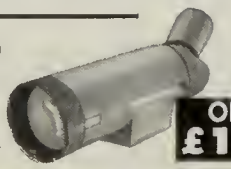
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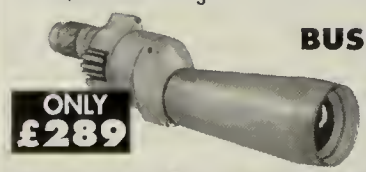
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Minutes of 3rd Conference of European Rarities Committees

ZEISS

A total of 28 participants from 16 countries attended the meeting of the Association of European Rarities Committees held in Kecskemet, Hungary, during 26th-28th August 1995 (plate 20).

For the next two years, the secretariat of the AERC will be based in Luxembourg and will be run jointly by Tom Conzemius (Luxembourg), Gábor Magyar (Hungary) and Paul Mosimann (Switzerland). The official sponsor of the AERC is *Carl Zeiss*.

The next meeting of the AERC will be held in the Slovak Republic in 1997, probably in the second half of July. *Carl Zeiss Germany* will again sponsor the meeting.

The following text is an abridged version of the Minutes of the meeting in Hungary.



Plate 20. Participants in 3rd Conference of European Rarities Committees, Kecskemet, Hungary, during 26th-28th August 1995. Back row, left to right: Jan Lontkowski, Zoltán Ecsedi, Colin Bradshaw, Tom Conzemius, Eduardo de Juana, Jan Pollet, Gintaras Matiukas; front row, left to right: Jari Peltomaki, Michal Skakuj, Tadeusz Stawarczyk, Urban Olsson, Helder Costa, Peter Barthel, Gábor Magyar, Martin Riesing, Gunnlaugur Thrainsson, Alan Knox, Walter Mergen, Christian Cederroth, Paul Mosimann, Josef Chytil, Alfred and Brona Trnka, David Parkin, Attila Bankovics, Celia Bradshaw.

'European List'

Christian Cederroth presented the first draft of the European List. The List will include columns for all European countries with an existing rarities committee (RC), but not those with no committee at present (e.g. Russia); the Atlantic islands and the Faroe Islands will have separate columns; species that should be reported to the national RC will be marked; species that have been reported elsewhere in Europe but not in the AERC countries will have a special column. The List will be published as a booklet, for use by all European birdwatchers. An introduction will explain the work of national RCs and contain the addresses of all European RCs. This List should improve the working relationship between birdwatchers travelling in Europe and the national RCs.

The escape problem

News from several countries has indicated that the escaped-bird situation is getting progressively worse. Not only is nearly every potential vagrant species (including eastern Palearctic gulls and South American waders) imported to Europe, but it is also extremely difficult if not impossible to get reliable numbers of imported birds. Traditional points of entry to the European Union are disappearing (many airlines now prohibit the bird trade), but new ones are opening in other countries (including Spain and other southern European countries) with less-strict regulations on bird imports. It is also possible that, with new European legislation in the near future, the importation of live birds into the EU will become much easier.

The following statements and decisions were made to tackle the problem:

1. The most important work of each RC is to check the correct identification of records, to collect all relevant records and to publish them.
2. A new category (E) will include all records of known escapes and known actively ship-assisted birds.
3. A working group on the escape problem has been created (Colin Bradshaw, Urban Olsson, Jan Pollet and Tadeusz Stawarczyk), which will collect information on bird-trade hot-spots all over Europe.
4. The working group will set up a Tracer Species Programme, so that known escapes can be followed to assess survival rates, migration routes, and so on.

Finance

The AERC aims to raise funds to pay part of the travel costs for some eastern RC-members to attend the meeting in the Slovak Republic in 1997.

'European Report'

Arnoud B. van den Berg and George Sangster (Netherlands) and Michal Skakuj and Jan Lontkowski (Poland) volunteered to compile an annual European report, beginning with 1993. This report will consider not only major rarities in each country, but also records of major biological relevance (e.g. range expansion, invasion). The English version will be made available to each national RC for translation into its own European language and publication in its national journal.

Publication and citations of unchecked records

Many editors of birding magazines are using unchecked reports for up-to-date publication. Often, these observations are never reported to the national RCs, and they are subsequently cited in more 'scientific' papers. As it is impossible to stop these up-to-date reports, the main problem is the citation of unreported (and therefore unchecked) or rejected observations. To improve the situation, the AERC will contact the editors and ask them to publish the following information in each introduction to such reports:

1. These are unchecked reports that must not be cited.
2. Anybody wishing to use these data should contact the relevant national RC.
3. Those supplying information are requested to report their observations to the relevant national RCs (this will be much easier when the AERC *European List* has been published).

National RCs intend always to inform the editors of any published reports which are subsequently rejected.

The need for a summary of national rarities reports, with only fully accepted national records and a more analytical concept than any of the news sections of major magazines, will be fulfilled by the proposed *European Report*. (Although the AERC considers the 'European news' of *British Birds* to be a rapid, interesting and reliable source of rarities news, and welcomes any co-operation between the AERC and *BB*, a future European Report will be the official forum for the AERC.)

Compilation of national RC publications

A list of all the national RC publications, compiled by Tadeusz Stawarczyk, is almost complete, and a copy will be sent to all AERC members. Some RC reports are published in small-circulation, local journals which are often difficult to obtain. All national RCs are encouraged, therefore, to publish their reports in major national journals.

Birds crossing national borders

All RCs should exchange documentation and provisional decisions before publication. It is important to reach a unanimous decision. If this is not possible, the record should be rejected by both RCs.

Tom Conzemius
AERC, D'Haus vun der Natur, L-1899 Kockelscheuer, Luxembourg

ZEISS

The inclusion of plates 21-29 in colour in this issue of *British Birds* has been subsidised by financial support from *Carl Zeiss*, sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Field identification of Little and Baillon's Crakes



David A. Christie, Hadoram Shirihai and Alan Harris

ABSTRACT The two small European crakes, Little Crake *Porzana parva* and Baillon's Crake *P. pusilla*, usually provide only fleeting views. It is, therefore, very important for observers to know and to concentrate instantly on the diagnostic features, which are examined in detail and summarised.

Unlike that of other difficult pairs of species in the West Palearctic, the identification of Little *Porzana parva* and Baillon's Crakes *P. pusilla* has been covered reasonably well in the last three or so decades by, for example, Wallace (1976), Cramp & Simmons (1980) and, lately, by Becker & Schmidt (1990), Jonsson (1992) and Bradshaw (1993). We consider, however, that there is still room for the following lines, which are based on material gathered over many years' observations of hundreds of individuals of both species in Israel and Europe and extensive examination of skins.

The principal objective of the following text is to point out the main features to be noted, and not to go into too much unnecessary detail that will not affect the process of separating the two species in the field.

Distribution and habitat

Both Little and Baillon's Crakes frequent marshes, shallow swamps, riparian thickets and stream or pond margins with abundant cover, breeding widely but patchily in much of central and southern Europe, with restricted or casual nesting in the Middle East and North Africa. Little Crake (which also breeds east to Kazakhstan) winters from the south Mediterranean region and North and Central Africa east to India. Baillon's breeds more widely east to Indonesia and Australasia

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and in southern and eastern Africa; Palearctic populations winter largely in southern subtropical and tropical areas. Typically, both species are very secretive and largely nocturnal, being observed most frequently during the very early or late hours of daylight (when their activities can be very noticeable).

General features

These are the two most closely similar of the West Palearctic crakes. Both are typically smaller and more slender-looking than the much bulkier Spotted *P. porzana* and vagrant Sora *P. carolina*, which always appear distinctly larger and heavy-bellied, and both also have well-defined black-and-white barring on the undertail-coverts; Spotted and Sora Crakes have plain buffish or whitish undertail-coverts, but beware rare individuals with undertail-covert markings ranging from dark tips to almost perfect barring. Otherwise, Little and Baillon's differ in most aspects of plumage. Interestingly, Little shows clear sexual dimorphism (adult male with rich olive-buff-brown upperparts and slate-blue face and underparts, but adult female predominantly suffused buff and brown above and below), whereas adult Baillon's shows very little or no plumage difference between the sexes and thus resembles adult male Little; juvenile and first-winter Baillon's recall female Little of the same age.

Structural differences

The basic distinguishing criterion in all plumages is wing structure. The primary projection of Little is distinctly longer (almost comparable to tertial length, with at least five well-spaced primary tips visible) compared with Baillon's (on which projection varies from one-quarter of tertial length to almost completely concealed, though often shows three to four closely spaced and bunched primary tips beyond the longest tertial); but beware Baillon's with missing tertials, or, more commonly, with wings not fully folded, which may, when viewed from above, produce apparent long projection as on Little. Less obvious structural differences include Little's relatively longer wedge-shaped tail (but only slightly longer than greater extension of folded wing) and its more slender and long-necked general appearance.

Separating adult males

Apart from Little's longer wing extension, the most constant and practical features distinguishing it from Baillon's are its red bill base (green on Baillon's), and its black-and-white barring on body sides normally being restricted to the rear body and not or only just reaching the leg line (on Baillon's, barring always extends well in front of leg line). Otherwise, Little is a muddy olive-brown above (never chestnut-brown as Baillon's), its scapulars and tertials show narrower blackish centres with wide paler olive-buff-brown fringes (rather than Baillon's Crake's broader blackish centres with narrow and warmer brown fringes), and the slate-blue of its face extends higher above the eye than on Baillon's. All male Little Crakes from first summer onwards have reduced white flecks above which are largely blotch-like in shape, whereas Baillon's is much more heavily marked with white streaks and ring-shaped spots.









Fig. 1. Little *Porzana parva* and Baillon's Crakes *P. pusilla* (*Alan Harris*). (Reproduced by permission of Macmillan Publishers Ltd)

Top left, male Little Crake — Top right, female Little Crake

Centre, juvenile Little Crake

Bottom left, adult Baillon's Crake — Bottom right, juvenile Baillon's Crake

FACING PAGE

Plate 21. Adult female Little Crake *Porzana parva*, Eilat, Israel, September 1986 (*Hadoram Shirihai*). This plumage and the red basal spot on bill are not shown by Baillon's Crake *P. pusilla* (adult female of which resembles adult male); note that both species have red iris.

Plate 22. Juvenile Little Crake *Porzana parva*, Eilat, Israel, September 1986 (*Hadoram Shirihai*). Note lack of prominent reddish basal bill spot, but most of lower mandible still mainly yellowish (predominantly greenish on Baillon's Crake *P. pusilla*); juveniles of both species have a dark olive-brown iris.

Plate 23. Adult Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*, Eilat, Israel, March 1984 (*Hadoram Shirihai*). Note more uniform, mainly green, bill colour.

Distinguishing adult female Little Crake

The plumage of adult female Little Crake resembles the buff-brown juvenile or first-winter plumage of both species, but a deep and uniform red iris indicates adult; there is no corresponding plumage of Baillon's, as adult female Baillon's more closely resembles the adult male. Otherwise, adult female Little has a green-yellow bill with a quite large red base, a long primary projection, paler and broader sandy-buff tertial and scapular fringes with narrower dark centres, and reduced body-side barring (extending just slightly in front of the leg line), all unlike juvenile and first-winter Baillon's.

Separating immatures

Juvenile and first-winter plumage exists at least until late autumn and winter, when adult plumage is gradually attained. Good ageing criteria for immatures are: iris colour, which is olive-brown (female) or olive-brown with some orange and red (male), as against deep red of adult; white tips to at least the inner primaries (although these are normally concealed by tertials on Baillon's), whereas adult lacks white primary tips; and heavier barring below. Little differs from Baillon's in having a longer 'primary extension' (see above), bill with dark green upper mandible and tip and with extensive yellow and often also a small amount of reddish-orange at base on lower mandible (rather than the fairly uniform dark olive-green bill of Baillon's), and in having much paler fringes to scapulars and tertials with slightly narrower dark centres (Baillon's has broader centres and narrower and warmer-coloured fringes). The general ground colour of Little's upperparts and upperwing-coverts is paler olive-brown (warmer rufous-brown on Baillon's), and these areas have far fewer white flecks than on Baillon's: on Little, the white flecks on the upperside are more like small blotches and are normally restricted to the inner mantle and back and to the greater coverts; on Baillon's, the white flecks often tend to be more streak-shaped and ring-shaped and extend widely over most upperpart feathers, including rump and uppertail-coverts and both median and greater coverts, where they are often arranged in rows to form a double wingbar (though normally heavily and irregularly scattered on wing-coverts to give fully spotted wings). Both species at this age are heavily barred below, but Little's strong black-and-white barring is confined chiefly to the rear body and upper flanks, with less on belly or breast (much heavier barring of Baillon's often reaches flanks and belly). Little's supercilium is much broader and deeper and contrastingly bordered by the much darker crown; Baillon's crown is much less dark and less sharply demarcated, often fading into (or intermixed with) the narrower, indistinct and buff or grey-brown supercilium.

Leg colour

The two species have quite similar olive-green legs, but those of adult Little are sometimes slightly tinged with yellow, whereas those of Baillon's often appear a deeper and darker green. The same applies to juveniles, but Baillon's Crake's legs then often have a slight fleshy-brown element (though still predominantly olive-green).

Voice

Both sexes of Little have a sharp alarm call, 'kweck'; the male's song is a loud, accelerating 'kuak...kuak kuak-kuak-kwa-wa-a-a-a', while unpaired females have a shorter song, a rapid 'keck-kuek-kuekwrrr'. Baillon's has generally a faster and more jarring trill than Little's, and often gives a 'kek' or 'tek', but the male's call and song are usually 'chrrrr-wirr-wirr' or 'trrrr-trrrr-trrr', reminiscent of several frog species; alarm 'tyiuk' or 'check'.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Lars Svensson for his comments on and improvements to the section on voice. We thank Mike Prince for allowing us to see his slides of Baillon's Crake. We also thank Macmillan Publishers Ltd for permitting us to reproduce the painting of Little and Baillon's Crakes from our forthcoming book *The Macmillan Birder's Guide to European and Middle Eastern Birds*.

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Hadoram Shirihai, PO Box 4168, Eilat 88102, Israel
Alan Harris, 60 East Park, Harlow, Essex CM17 0SE



LOOKING BACK

Fifty years ago, a Note reported on: 'COMMON GULLS NESTING ON BIRCH TREES. In June, 1945, during a period of leave spent on Upper Deeside (Aberdeenshire), I noted on several occasions Common Gulls (*Larus c. canus*), perching on trees near the rivers Dee and Clunie. On June 7th, my attention was attracted by one of a pair perched on the branch of a birch tree on the fringe of a small wood near Braemar, and on approaching, I saw that the second bird was sitting on a nest built lower down in the same tree. The nest, which was made of grass, contained three eggs and was built about fourteen fect from the ground . . . IAN D. PENNIE.' (*Brit. Birds* 39: 61)

Twenty-five years ago, but still in the news today: 'We emphasise again that the absurdities of the Hastings Rarities as a whole were thc uniquely large proportion of class I rarities, the absence or small numbers of many lesser rarities that one would expect if the policy were to encourage a wide circle of country people to bring in any unfamiliar birds, and the astonishing incidence of multiple records of pairs and parties. E. M. NICHOLSON and I. J. FERGUSON-LEES' (*Brit. Birds* 64: 68, February 1971)

MONTHLY MARATHON

With Christmas and New Year postal delays still affecting incoming mail from overseas, even in mid January, we are extending the deadline for receipt of entries for the fourth stage of the current Marathon (December's plate 221). So far, seven species have been named. The answer will be revealed next month.

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Plate 24. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 116: sixth stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. *Read the rules on page 24 of the January issue*, then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th March 1996.

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Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1993

Malcolm Ogilvie and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel



ABSTRACT The Rare Breeding Birds Panel's twenty-first report provides a summary for the whole of the United Kingdom for 1993.

Heavy rains at critical periods proved to be detrimental for a number of species.

The year's main features included: continued declines of both Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* and Corn Crakes *Crex crex*; but continued increases of Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus*, Red Kites *Milvus milvus*, Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus*, Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* and Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*; a record year for both Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana* and Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata*; and a welcome revival for Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris*.

Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* attempted to breed. Various other vagrant species showed signs of breeding behaviour, the most significant, perhaps, being those involving Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* and Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*.

This is the twenty-first annual Report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. It includes the details of the breeding status of each species on the Panel's list which possibly, probably or certainly bred in 1993. The information presented varies according to the perceived sensitivity of the species to disturbance or to nest robbery. Thus, for the majority, the counties are grouped into the Panel's ten

regions (see page 65), though for some it is possible to list the actual counties, whereas for others only country totals are given.

This report is being published more than two years after the end of the calendar year with which it deals. The process of catching up on which we have embarked, however, with the gratefully acknowledged help of county recorders and species co-ordinators, should permit the publication of the 1994 Report later this year, and the 1995 Report in early 1997.

The Panel

The current (January 1996) membership of the Panel is Dr L. A. Batten, Dr C. J. Bibby, Dr H. Q. P. Crick, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Dr K. W. Smith, D. A. Stroud and Dr M. A. Ogilvie (Secretary). Dr Crick replaced Dr J. J. D. Greenwood, who resigned during the year, and to whom the other members of the Panel are most grateful for his contributions to its work at a time of development in the Panel's activitives. The individual members of the Panel serve in a personal capacity, but four of them are additionally able to reflect the interest and needs of the respective sponsoring bodies. The work of the Panel is supported financially by the JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies), with further financial contributions coming from the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*.

The Panel collects records from the whole of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, but not from the Republic of Ireland. Coverage, for the third successive year, was virtually complete, with records (or nil returns) received from every single county and region. Gathering comprehensive information for some species is still a problem; any gaps are mentioned in the species accounts.

Review of the year 1993

The 1993 breeding season was marred in many areas by several periods of heavy rain, often resulting in local flooding. The nests of many ground-nesting birds were flooded, while the productivity of several other species was adversely affected. The BTO's Nest Record Scheme reported that it was a relatively poor year for many common species, with reduced clutch sizes and poor nesting success (*BTO News* 196: 14-16). Similarly, records sent to the Panel showed that there was a reduction in numbers and breeding success of several rare species.

Red-necked *Podiceps grisegena* and Black-necked Grebes *P. nigricollis* both declined in numbers compared with 1992. Although the number of pairs of Slavonian Grebes *P. auritus* held up, their productivity was extremely, and worryingly, low. Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* did rather better, with at least ten young produced, even though the number of booming males fell yet again.

Northern Pintails *Anas acuta* and Garganeys *A. querquedula* maintained their numbers, though a reduction in localities for the latter species was particularly noticeable in the northern half of Britain, suggesting either poor migration or bad weather discouraging Garganeys from heading as far north as usual. Common Pochards *Aythya ferina* declined sharply both in localities and in numbers, but continued extensive survey work on Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* produced a further substantial increase of records.

Raptors had a patchy season. Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* reared 11 young, beating last year's record total by one, and both Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* and Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* recorded further increases, to new record levels. The Welsh Red Kites *Milvus milvus*, however, had a poor year, with many nest failures and brood reductions caused by periods of very wet weather at critical times. The re-established Red Kites in England and Scotland each had their best year to date, though the weather reduced their productivity, too. Montagu's Harriers *C. pygargus* raised as many young as in their previous best year, 1992, but the number of localities and of pairs fell for the second year running, with no reports from northern England, into which the species had appeared to be expanding.

Common Quails *Coturnix coturnix* arrived in modest numbers this year, and largely remained in the southern half of Britain. Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana* had their best year on record, with 31 singing males, compared with the previous best, in 1989 and 1990, of 21. There was even that rare event, a proved breeding record, when a juvenile was seen at a Scottish site where it was known that a pair was present. The results of the full national census of Corn Crakes *Crex crex* are included in brief. Total numbers are now under 500 singing males, compared with almost 600 as recently as 1988 and over 700 in 1978-79. There are, though, some encouraging results coming from the management now being carried out in the Inner and Outer Hebrides.

Summering Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* put in an appearance for the first time for five years, but sadly their breeding attempt failed. Numbers of Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* were slightly down, but productivity marginally up. Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus*, too, managed a small increase in the number of young per pair. There was a sharp drop from last year's record number of localities for Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax*, but, as last year, there was no definite breeding, despite reports of lekking from six or seven sites. Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*, too, appeared in fewer localities than last year, but numbers of pairs held up well.

Among the very rare waders, Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii*, Purple Sandpipers *C. maritima* and Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola* all bred, the last-named having their best year for a long time. Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* continue to do quite well on Fetlar, where careful management is being carried out to improve conditions for them, but this was offset by their non-appearance at two former regular breeding sites.

Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* maintained their slow increase, though the picture is complicated in at least one area by hybridisation with Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*. The long-standing mixed pair of Lesser Crested *Sterna bengalensis* and Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* was present on and off through the summer at its usual Northumberland haunt, but did not breed and, perhaps as a result, turned up at a number of localities between the Borders and Norfolk. Roseate Terns *S. dougallii* showed an increase in the number of pairs, but fledging success was patchy.

It is most encouraging to be able to report a second successive increase in the number of localities for Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* and a tiny increase in numbers, but Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* had their poorest season for several years.

There was a welcome increase in the number of Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus*

palustris, but an alarming decline for Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*. Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* continue to do well, in the absence of any really severe winter weather. As last year, the report includes records of vagrant warblers singing or showing other signs of breeding behaviour. Both Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus* and Desert Warbler *S. nana* were seen carrying nesting material.

The picture for Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* was very similar to last year's in terms of numbers and distribution, but productivity fell quite sharply. Other passerines also had mixed fortunes, with numbers of Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus* up, but Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* sadly down, and Common Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus* failing to repeat last year's breeding success.

Including the Desert Warbler, already mentioned, no fewer than five species make their first appearance in these reports: Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, not breeding yet but surely it is only a matter of time; Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, a male displaying to a female Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus*; Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, a pair displaying, which may be of little consequence, but is worth putting on record; and Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, a single singing male.

Publications

Since the publication of the last report, a number of papers making use of the data collected by the Panel have appeared. These are referred to under the relevant species accounts. Of more general interest has been the publication of a survey of what might happen to rare species of fauna and flora in Britain in the event of climatic change (*Climate Change and Rare Species in Britain*, edited by G. W. Elmes & A. Free, ITE research publication no. 8, 1994). Using a detailed analysis of results published in the Panel's reports, it concludes that increased temperatures, provided summer rainfall was maintained at present levels, would benefit about one-third of rare breeding species. If summer droughts became more common, however, or wet, cold winters were more frequent, both of which have been predicted, then as many as half of our rare species might be adversely affected. Interestingly, increased rainfall was thought to be of potential benefit to up to 15 species, including expected wetland birds such as Black-necked Grebe and Northern Pintail, but also some land birds, for example Purple Sandpiper and Firecrest. The positive effect of rainfall in promoting the production of food supplies in the form of seeds and invertebrates is considered important. It is also acknowledged, however, that, for some species, rainfall can have a damaging effect, as has been shown this year, by increasing losses of eggs and young.

Acknowledgments

The Panel, and in particular its Secretary, very gratefully acknowledges the willing co-operation of the following in supplying information. We apologise for any inadvertent omissions.

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We should also like to express our sincere thanks to all the very many individuals whose field-work produced the observations which make up this report.

Key to geographical regions used in this report

England, SW Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isles of Scilly, Isle of Wight, Somerset, Wiltshire

England, SE Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Greater London, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex (East and West)

England, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire and South Humberside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk

England, Central Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Worcestershire

England, N Cheshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, North Humberside, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire (North, South and West)

Wales All present-day counties (i.e. includes Gwent, the former Monmouth)

Scotland, S The regions of Borders, Dumfries & Galloway, Lothian and part of Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Ayrshire, Berwickshire, Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Lanarkshire, Lothian (East, Mid and West), Peeblesshire, Renfrewshire, Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, Wigtownshire

Scotland, Mid The regions of Central, Fife, Grampian and Tayside, together with parts of Highland and Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Aberdeenshire, Angus, Banffshire, Clackmannanshire, Dunbartonshire, Fife, Kincardineshire, Kinross, Moray, Nairn, Perthshire, Stirlingshire

Scotland, N & W Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles, together with the greater part of Highland and part of Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Argyllshire, Bute, Caithness, Inverness-shire, Ross & Cromarty, Sutherland

Northern Ireland Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Tyrone

Systematic list

The definitions of 'Confirmed breeding', 'Probable breeding' and 'Possible breeding' used in the Panel's reports follow those recommended by the European Ornithological Atlas Committee (now part of the European Bird Census Council). Within tables, the abbreviations 'Confirmed (pairs)' and 'Possible (pairs)' mean 'Number of pairs confirmed breeding' and 'Number of pairs possibly or probably breeding', respectively.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Seven localities in six counties: only singles recorded.

England, SW One locality: one, paired with a Great Crested Grebe *P. cristatus*, from February to 7th April.

England, E Three localities: (1) one from 25th April to 12th July; (2) one from 25th April to 21st June; (3) one in March and August at site where pair attempted to breed in 1992.

England, N One locality: breeding-plumaged adult from 21st April to 21st June, seen displaying.

Scotland, S One locality: adult on 9th May at site used by summering pair in past years.

Scotland, Mid One locality: adult in breeding plumage on a sea loch, 25th June.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	2	1	1	5	10	8	6	5	3	9	7
No. individuals	3	1	4	5	9	12	9	3	4	12	7
No. pairs	1	0	1	1	1	3	3	2	1	3	0

It is disappointing that no pairs were reported this year following the good season last year with two pairs nest-building and copulating. Even the southern Scotland pair, which had managed four consecutive years of platform-building, failed to appear this year.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

33 localities: 73-77 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid and N & W 33 localities: (1)-(33) total of 73 pairs bred, producing a minimum of 25 young to near fledging; also four singles.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	44	26	40	43	39	22	39	36	31	34	33
Confirmed (pairs)	41	39	63	68	33	31	70	74	61	72	73
Possible (pairs)	38	21	18	19	6	6	8	12	13	5	4
Max. total pairs	79	60	81	87	39	37	78	86	74	77	77

Following the full census in 1992, only previously known breeding sites were visited in 1993; nevertheless, almost exactly the same number of pairs was located. Breeding success, however, was very poor, with only 25 young thought to have been reared, compared with 44 in 1992. Further work is being carried out by the RSPB to determine the main causes of loss, though it is known that some nests were destroyed by wave action, others were taken over by Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, and eggs were stolen by both crows *Corvus* and

egg-collectors. Mammalian predators have also been responsible for the deaths of at least 11 adults at one site in the last two years.

Although the population is holding its own, it remains very vulnerable, with 40% occurring on just three lochs.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

31 localities in 15 counties: 24-50 pairs breeding, producing a minimum of 25 young to near fledging.

England, SE Three localities: (1) pair probably bred, adults until 15th June, juvenile on 13th September; (2) two adults on 26th April and one until 29th May at site where has bred previously; (3) pair from 23rd to 29th May.

England, E Three localities: (1) pair from 27th May to 17th June, copulation noted; (2) one from 31st May to 18th July, built a platform and joined by second individual from 2nd to 18th July, third on 2nd July; (3) one on 5th May and two on 7th June.

England, Central Three localities: (1) pair built two platforms, first washed away, clutch of four eggs taken from second before hatching; (2) one to four adults from 9th April to 31st August, juvenile from 11th July to 31st August, but not thought to have been bred locally; (3) pair with juvenile on 22nd July, but not locally bred.

England, N 16 localities: (1) four pairs bred and four broods totalling five young seen, from which four fledged; (2) four pairs bred and six young probably fledged; (3) three pairs bred, four or five young fledged; (4) two pairs to 2nd June, then one pair with two young to 5th July, thereafter only one adult seen; (5) one pair fledged two young; (6) pair with two half-grown young on 9th August; (7) pair from 14th May to 17th July, display noted; (8) pair in early May; (9)(10) single pairs in May; (11) three pairs in May, but possibly visiting from site 1; (12) pair on 21st and 22nd April; (13) single in early April and from mid June to mid August; (14)(15) singles in mid April; (16) single on 21st July.

Scotland, S One locality: pair all summer, any nest probably flooded.

Scotland, Mid Five localities: (1) five pairs bred, rearing four young; (2) two pairs bred; (3) pair reared two young; (4) pair, but no evidence of breeding; (5) pair with two young in late summer, but did not breed there.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	19	17	17	15	19	22	19	19	25	29	31
Confirmed (pairs)	11	17	9	11	27	15	25	21	19	26	24
Possible (pairs)	21	13	13	22	12	20	15	16	34	34	26
Max. total pairs	32	30	22	33	39	35	40	37	53	60	50

The number of localities has increased again over last year's record level, but the number of pairs, both confirmed and possible, has declined.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*

One locality: one in spring and summer.

Scotland, N & W One locality.

SHETLAND One locality: adult in gannetry, Hermaness, from 7th April to 13th July.

A longer and more continuous stay than last year, for this individual which has been summering in Scotland in all but two of the last 23 years.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

13 localities: 17 booming males, at least ten young seen.

England, E 11 localities: (1) three males and at least five females, five young; (2) two booming males, two young; (3) two booming males, one young fledged; (4) one booming male, one juvenile; (5) pair, one young; (6) two, including one booming male; (7) pair reported, but did

not breed; (8)-(10) single booming males; (11) single in May and June, but no booming heard.
England, Central One locality: injured adult all summer.
England, N One locality: four booming males, occasionally five in May.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	18	18	15	12	17	14	14	12	13	14	13
Confirmed nesting	0	5	0	0	1	2	3	3	4	4	5
Booming males	44	36	28	23	22	30	30	20	19	19	17

Although the number of confirmed nesting records is higher than for several years, this is mainly a result of increased observation, the species being the subject of detailed annual monitoring by the RSPB. The slow and apparently inexorable decline in the number of booming males continues, but a major habitat restoration programme in England, by English Nature and the RSPB, will hopefully not be too late to halt the decline and encourage a recovery in numbers.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Two localities in two counties: two pairs mating or displaying.
England, SW Two localities: (1) pair mating in early May, stick-collecting in early July; (2) pair reported displaying at the end of May.

This species has not previously figured in these reports, but it is surely only a matter of time before the first breeding in Britain takes place, especially given the increase in regular wintering numbers on the South Coast. There were reports of over 50 in Britain in both May and June 1993, again with a concentration on the South Coast.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

20 localities: four pairs breeding, only one of which was considered wild; one young reared.
England, SE Two localities: (1) pair bred, fledging one young, also seven other adults (also bred there in 1992, an addition to the 1992 Report); (2) single throughout most of year.
Scotland, S Three localities: (1) pair bred, but nest flooded; (2) pair plus single summered, all injured; (3) injured individual summered.
Scotland, Mid Three localities: (1) pair bred, but young did not survive bad weather; (2) pair, not thought to be wild, displaying on 24th May, but did not breed; (3) second-summer on suitable breeding loch on 13th June.
Scotland, N & W 12 localities: (1) pair, considered to be wild, built nest and probably laid, but flooded following heavy rain; (2) four adults (probably two pairs) for at least one week in early June; (3)-(11) single summering individuals, some or all probably injured; (12) single on 10th June.

One apparently wild pair bred unsuccessfully. The number of summering, probably injured, individuals in northern Britain showed an increase over 1992, but this is largely due to better reporting. There were the usual small numbers of escaped or introduced individuals or pairs scattered from the Central Region of Scotland to southern Britain, of which just one pair bred successfully.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

23 localities: 4-47 pairs breeding.
England, SE Four localities: (1) two or three pairs summered, but not thought to have bred; (2) two pairs all May, additional female to 7th June, single male thereafter; (3) one on 30th May; (4) one on 1st and 4th June.

England, E Two localities: (1) pair probably bred, but unsuccessful; (2) pair, but no evidence of breeding.
England, Central One locality: male and two females in April and May, one female in June and July, some display noted.
England, N One locality: two pairs from late April to end June, display noted in late April, at least five individuals in July.
Wales Two localities: (1) pair bred, one young seen, but probably killed by gulls *Larus*; (2) pair nested, but no young reared.
Scotland, N & W 13 localities: (1) pair bred, brood of four young; (2) male and two females, nest with nine eggs; (3) six pairs; (4) two pairs, one pair possibly bred; (5)-(7) single pairs in May/June; (8) two males and female in May; (9)(10) single pairs in May; (11) nine males on 7th May; (12) three males on 4th May; (13) female in June.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	23	15	17	14	16	20	16	20	28	23	23
Confirmed (pairs)	12	5	9	6	7	14	11	9	4	13	4
Possible (pairs)	20	13	12	12	14	15	28	27	39	35	43
Max. total pairs	32	18	21	18	21	29	38	36	43	48	47

Although the number of sites is the same as in 1992, there has been a slight decline in the number of pairs. No Northern Pintails were noted this year in South or Mid Scotland, but there were more than the usual numbers in northern Scotland, mainly owing to survey work in the Inner Hebrides.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

73 localities: 14-163 pairs breeding.
England, SW Nine localities in four counties: 3-21 pairs breeding.
England, SE 25 localities in seven counties: 5-40 pairs breeding.
England, E 20 localities in six counties: 5-62 pairs breeding.
England, Central Five localities in three counties: 0-11 pairs breeding.
England, N Eight localities in five counties: 0-18 pairs breeding.
Scotland, S One locality: 0-1 pair breeding.
Scotland, Mid One locality: 0-1 pair breeding.
Scotland, N & W Three localities: 0-8 pairs breeding.
Northern Ireland One locality: 1 pair breeding.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	59	46	32	42	36	37	81	87	90	90	73
Confirmed (pairs)	15	4	4	8	8	11	18	14	12	16	14
Possible (pairs)	55	53	36	47	37	40	80	97	82	144	149
Max. total pairs	70	57	40	55	45	51	98	111	94	160	163

The large decrease in the number of localities arises from many fewer Garganeys appearing in northern England and Scotland than last year (13 sites compared with 35), only slightly offset by an increase in southeastern England. The total number of individuals, though, was slightly higher than last year's record numbers, suggesting that the poor weather may have discouraged them from penetrating so far north.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

One locality: male paired with Northern Shoveler *A. clypeata*.
England, SW One locality: adult male paired with female Northern Shoveler from 4th May to 3rd June, then again on 7th July, when copulation was recorded. The female Northern Shoveler was thought to have been incubating in late May, but no young were seen.

This is only the second time that this species has appeared in these reports. The previous occasion was in 1988, when a male also paired with a female Northern Shoveler, in Cambridgeshire, and three young were reared.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

117 localities: 237-416 pairs breeding.

England, SW Seven localities in three counties: 19-24 pairs breeding.
England, SE 45 localities in six counties: 113-197 pairs breeding.
England, E 25 localities in four counties: 57-89 pairs breeding.
England, Central 14 localities in three counties: 6-28 pairs breeding.
England, N 14 localities in five counties: 31-61 pairs breeding.
Wales Five localities: 4-6 pairs breeding.
Scotland, S Two localities: 2 pairs breeding.
Scotland, Mid Five localities: 5-9 pairs breeding.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	68	63	138	116	133	161	145	117
Confirmed (pairs)	126	130	185	260	207	284	266	237
Possible (pairs)	59	44	162	76	86	144	292	179
Max. total pairs	185	174	347	336	293	428	558	416

There has been a substantial drop in numbers of localities (the lowest since 1989) and pairs (the lowest since 1990). The decline is concentrated in central and northern England and Scotland, where the number of localities declined from 63 to 40 and the maximum total of pairs from 218 to 111. Bad weather may have been a major factor. Of those pairs that did breed, flooded nests were most commonly mentioned as a cause of failure.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

None reported.

No records of this species were received by the Panel in 1993, for the second consecutive year.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

38 localities: 16-88 pairs.

Scotland, S and Mid Three localities: (1) up to three pairs and a single adult during April-August, 'alarming' female on 11th July; (2) pair on 17th May and male on 3rd June; (3) male on 6th May and pair on 4th June.

Scotland, N & W 35 localities.

ARGYLL Two localities: (1) up to nine pairs, female with brood on sea nearby in early August; (2) pair in June in suitable habitat.

HIGHLAND 32 localities: (1) six pairs on 11th June, brood on 31st July; (2) four pairs, two broods seen; (3) three pairs, two broods seen; (4) three females, two with broods on 31st July; (5) three pairs in May and July; (6) two pairs and a male on 8th May, female with brood on 8th July; (7) two females in late June, one with brood on 1st July; (8) two pairs in May and August; (9) two pairs on 16th May; (10) up to six adults on 1st June, pair probably bred; (11) female with brood on 23rd July; (12) pair on 15th May, female with brood on 26th July; (13) female with brood on 22nd July; (14) brood on 15th July; (15) pair on 27th April, 'alarming' female on 28th May; (16) male and two females on 11th May, pair on 21st May and 15th June; (17)-(24) single pairs in May; (25)-(28) single pairs in June; (29)(30) single pairs in July; (31) female on 24th June; (32) nine males and six females on 7th May, but not thought to be a potential breeding site.

SHETLAND One locality: two broods, first on 14th July.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	6	9	25	35	15	36	7	9	14	32	38
Confirmed (pairs)	10	17	2	8	29	14	8	6	9	9	16
Possible (pairs)	75	52	72	92	33	76	32	23	21	62	72
Max. total pairs	85	69	74	100	62	90	40	29	30	71	88

The detailed survey work begun by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust in 1992 continued in 1993 and contributed towards the further increases in both localities and pairs. This is still a very scarce breeding species and one that is difficult to census and, especially, to prove breeding, but the pattern of distribution and probable total numbers are becoming clearer. Sadly, though, there were no breeding records from Northern Ireland, where, in the 1960s, there were up to 150 pairs; only males were seen at the site used in recent years.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Breeding almost exclusively in one extensive nestbox scheme, but increasing numbers are summering elsewhere.

England, SW One locality.

AVON One locality: female summered.

England, SE Five localities.

ESSEX One locality: male in June, at least two females in July.

HERTFORDSHIRE Four localities: (1) female until 3rd May and again on 26th June; (2) female until 18th May; (3) female from 19th to 25th May; (4) injured female summered.

England, E One locality.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: female on 9th June.

England, Central Four localities.

DERBYSHIRE One locality: female, possibly injured, summered, second female on 28th August.

LEICESTERSHIRE Two localities: (1) four males on 23rd May and two from 1st to 20th June; (2) female on 24th July.

STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: male from 5th to 15th June.

England, N Three localities.

CHESHIRE Two localities: (1) male from 28th May to 19th June; (2) immature male summered.

LANCASHIRE One locality: three pairs bred, one brood seen and two clutches stolen. This small population originated from full-winged individuals escaped from a wildfowl collection.

Scotland, S Five localities.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Three localities: (1) pair on 23rd May and female on 18th July; (2) four on 27th April; (3) male on 20th May.

LOTHIAN Two localities: (1) pair on 6th June; (2) immature male on 29th June and 16th July.

Scotland, Mid Five localities.

FIFE One locality: pair and three immature females summered.

TAYSIDE Four localities: (1) pair until mid May, male staying to late May; (2) pair on 22nd May and female on 28th; (3) five on 24th April; (4) male on 28th May, possibly from site 1.

Scotland, N & W Nine localities.

ARGYLL One locality: female on 19th July.

HIGHLAND Eight localities: (1) main nestbox area: incomplete survey of the boxes found 70 occupied: 386 eggs laid in 36 of them and minimum of 152 young hatched; (2) second nestbox area had 23 occupied boxes and up to four natural sites; (3) two boxes used; (4) one box used; (5) pair nested in dead Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*; (6) pair attempted to breed in natural site; (7) adult pair all summer; (8) pair until early May.

The figures from the nestbox areas in Highland are incomplete for the second year running, now that comprehensive monitoring has ceased, and the table of confirmed pairs and young hatched has therefore been discontinued. Elsewhere in Scotland, a few pairs are now breeding, while numbers in England continue to grow slowly, though only escaped individuals are, as yet, breeding there.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

23 localities in ten counties: 6-27 pairs breeding; minimum of 11 young reared.

Great Britain 23 localities: (1) pair raised two young, second pair may have bred; (2) two pairs, one rearing two young, not known if second pair bred; (3)-(5) single pairs each raised two young; (6) pair raised one young; (7) immature pair built nest, but did not lay; (8) pair displaying on 14th August; (9) two males and a female through summer, no nest looked for; (10) pair may have been present all summer; (11) adult male, immature male and two immature females, but no adult female; (12) up to five in area, but no breeding proved; (13) one or two from 3rd July to 11th September; (14) adult 'skydancing' on 17th July, two immatures on 18th; (15) up to four in May and three in July, but probably not breeding there; (16) one on 6th June and three, including two immatures, on 17th August, but probably did not breed there; (17) one on 24th May and two on 3rd July, probably wanderers from other sites; (18) up to two in late June and one on 3rd July, probably wanderers from other sites; (19) single on three dates in June; (20) one on 27th June; (21) one on 27th July; (22) one on 7th and 20th August, three on 28th August; (23) one on 13th August.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Confirmed (pairs)	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	8	6
Max. total pairs	5	2	4	6	7	10	20	19	22	26	27

The 11 young reared is one more than last year's record. The maximum of total pairs excludes 11 individuals at localities 15-18 which it is thought were wanderers from other sites. These areas may, however, prove to be suitable for breeding in the future.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

134 pairs bred; 103 young reared.

Wales 104 pairs were proved to breed, of which 61 were successful, rearing 82 young. In addition, there were a further 11 non-breeding pairs, while 88 unmated individuals were identified during the spring. The total population was estimated as at least 310, possibly 350, in April and 397 in August. With the total numbers of individuals and pairs at new highs, the proportion of non-laying pairs was the lowest since 1972, reflecting the unusually favourable early-season conditions. Very wet weather in late May, however, and, in particular, on 10th-11th June, when 140 mm of rain fell in 30 hours, induced many nest failures and even more brood reductions. Thus, the expected further increase in the annual number of young fledged failed to materialise, though it was still the second-best year on record. (The Panel's thanks go to Peter Davis for his detailed report. His work is funded by the Countryside Commission for Wales and the RSPB.)

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Total pairs	46	46	54	58	59	68	71	84	92	102	115
Breeding pairs	33	33	43	40	44	49	54	65	76	84	104
Successful pairs	30	13	19	23	27	27	33	47	41	60	61
Young reared	24	21	25	29	39	38	49	73	62	96	82

The breeding populations re-established by a joint JNCC/RSPB project made further progress. (The Panel is grateful to Ian Evans, JNCC, for the following information.)

England Nine pairs were found breeding, but one pair failed subsequently at hatching during a period of heavy rain. This period of detrimental weather also reduced productivity of the successful pairs, as only 14 young were reared. No first-years bred, but two non-breeding pairs consisting of first-years were located. A further 20 juvenile Red Kites were imported from northeastern Spain and released in southern England. The total August population of Red Kites in England was 80.

Scotland Five pairs were proved breeding, of which three pairs were successful, rearing seven young. Three additional pairs and four single males held territory, but did not breed. A further 24 juvenile Red Kites were imported from Sweden and released in northern Scotland. The total August population of Red Kites in Scotland was 79.

England	1991	1992	1993
Total pairs	2	7	12
Breeding pairs	2	4	9
Successful pairs	0	4	8
Young reared	0	9	14

Scotland	1992	1993
Total pairs	2	8
Breeding pairs	2	5
Successful pairs	1	3
Young reared	1	7

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Re-establishment.

Scotland Twenty-one individuals occupied ten territories, one containing a single male with two females. Six clutches were laid and five young reared from four broods. An additional ten immatures, brought from Norway, were released.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Breeding pairs	2	4	5	6	6	6	9	8	8	6
Successful pairs	0	1	1	2	1	3	2	6	3	4
Young reared	0	1	2	3	2	5	2	7	7	5

Although the number of occupied territories continues to increase, rearing success was lower than in 1991 or 1992. (The Panel is grateful to the Sea Eagle Project Team for providing it with information.)

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

109-145 'pairs' bred, rearing 244 young.

Great Britain As in recent years, the figures for both 'pairs' and numbers of males and females are subject to some degree of estimation from the available data, as it is not always possible for observers to be certain of the precise sex ratio in polygamous situations. The number of young consists only of those reported to have fledged and is easily another record.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Breeding males	21	27	29	26	40	42	58	73	83	92	84
Breeding females	28	32	31	32	46	56	66	110	91	107	110
Young	71	66	86	82	126	145	172	145	198	229	244

Another good year, despite poor summer weather, with further slight increases in numbers in northern England and Scotland. (The Panel wishes to thank Michael Seago and Bob Image for the continued provision of detailed information on this species.)

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

Male displaying to Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus*.

Scotland, Mid

TAYSIDE One locality: a second-summer male from 3rd to 5th May, displaying to female Hen Harrier.

This is a new species for these reports. The only precedent for such an occurrence took place in the Netherlands in the mid 1980s, though it should also

be noted that a successful mixed pairing with Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* was reported from Finland in 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 268).

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Eight localities: 6-9 pairs bred, rearing 16 young.

England, SW Three localities: (1) pair raised three young; (2) pair in May, male carrying food into hay field, but no further details; (3) male.

England, SE Two localities: (1) male on 3rd and 28th May; (2) first-summer female from 22nd to 27th May.

England, E Three localities: (1) pair raised five young; (2) pair raised three young; (3) two females, sharing one male, raised three and two young.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	8	2	9	10	10	14	15	9	14	12	8
Confirmed (pairs)	6	1	3	7	6	6	7	5	7	8	6
Possible (pairs)	4	1	6	3	4	8	8	4	7	4	3
Max. total pairs	10	2	9	10	10	14	15	9	14	12	9

The numbers of localities and pairs have fallen for the second year running, though the 16 young reared equals last year's record. The recent expansion of the range into northern England, where two pairs bred in 1992, seems to have received a setback, one hopes only temporarily.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Up to 292 localities: 199-299 pairs breeding.

England and Wales Up to 244 localities in 29 counties: up to 166 pairs are thought to have bred, of which 131 were reported as successful, hatching between them a minimum of 283 young, at least 170 of which are believed to have fledged; 39 nests were known to have failed, with nest robbery the most frequent cause. A further 55 pairs and 30 singles were reported.

Scotland Up to 48 localities in six regions: 33 pairs are known to have bred, of which 26 were successful, rearing at least 78 young, and seven certainly failed; 11 pairs and four singles were also reported.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. counties	19	22	20	31	31	31	23	30	36	34	35
Confirmed (pairs)	34	36	36	57	54	108	112	93	158	150	199
Possible (pairs)	27	42	39	59	40	68	54	79	71	93	100
Max. total pairs	61	78	75	116	94	176	166	172	229	243	299

The number of pairs reported continues to increase, though still probably a considerable underestimate of the true population. We do urge observers and recorders to make every effort to record and report this species in order that we may obtain as accurate a picture as possible. The conservation response to the continued persecution of this species needs to be based on the best possible information.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

88 pairs: 78 pairs laid eggs, rearing 111 young.

England, SE One locality: adult from 1st July to 3rd August.

England, E One locality: adult from 15th May to 3rd August.

England, N One locality: one from 15th May to 27th July.

Scotland The number of pairs increased yet again, to 88, no fewer than 12 more than last year. Of these, 78 pairs laid and 59 hatched young, with 56 successful pairs rearing 111 young, an average of 1.26 per pair.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Pairs	30	31	34	42	50	53	58	62	73	76	88
Successful pairs	20	21	22	24	30	38	38	44	44	48	56
Young reared	45	47	53	48	56	81	81	90	82	101	111

A substantial improvement in numbers of pairs, though productivity per pair was down compared with last year. Nest failures arose from a variety of causes, including bad weather, predation and interference by other Ospreys. There were, however, no reports of nest robberies. (The above is based on the report supplied to the Panel by Roy Dennis and his associates.)

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

At least 477 localities: 152-493 pairs breeding.
England, SW 43-133 pairs breeding, 72 young reported.
England, SE 58-204 pairs breeding, 76 young reported.
England, E 23-75 pairs breeding, 35 young reported.
England, Central 25-63 pairs breeding, 56 young reported.
England, N 0-5 pairs breeding, no young reported.
Wales 3-12 pairs breeding, five young reported.
Scotland 0-1 pair breeding, no young reported.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Confirmed (pairs)	80	93	98	91	108	103	140	154	159	255	152
Possible (pairs)	182	116	148	202	164	226	250	287	310	327	341
Max. total pairs	262	209	246	293	272	329	390	441	469	582	493
Young reared (min.)	104	91	117	126	160	133	205	239	265	279	243

The fall from the previous year's high totals may reflect the generally poor summer.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

172 localities: 1-203 pairs breeding.
England, SW 31 localities: 0-33 pairs breeding.
England, SE 29 localities: 0-44 pairs breeding.
England, E 58 localities: 1-62 pairs breeding.
England, Central 22 localities: 0-29 pairs breeding.
England, N 17 localities: 0-19 pairs breeding.
Scotland, S Four localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.
Scotland, Mid Five localities: 0-5 pairs breeding.
Scotland, N & W Six localities: 0-7 pairs breeding.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	84	152	130	904	255	88	319	172
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	5	27	13	2	9	1
Possible (pairs)	110	245	158	1628	364	105	481	202
Max. total pairs	111	246	163	1655	377	107	490	203

A moderate year, but with the distribution very much weighted towards the southern half of England. Relatively few penetrated as far north as Scotland, and there were no records from Wales or Northern Ireland.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

19 localities: 1-33 pairs breeding.

England, SW Three localities: (1) one singing during 18th-23rd April, where has bred in past years; (2) one singing from 23rd to 30th April; (3) one singing on 28th May, also one seen 24th August to 2nd September.
England, SE One locality: two singing on 20th April.
England, E Three localities: (1) up to three males singing; (2) one singing on 5th and 13th May, three attracted by tape lure on 15th; (3) one singing on 9th July.
England, N One locality: one singing on 20th and 22nd June.
Wales Five localities: (1) three singing from mid June to July; (2) up to three singing in June; (3) two singing from 22nd to 30th June, one seen on 16th July; (4) two singing in late June; (5) one singing on 15th April.
Scotland, Mid One locality: one singing 8th June.
Scotland, N & W Five localities: (1) two singing, female also calling, juvenile on 10th August; (2) three singing in late May and early June; (3) two singing in early June; (4)(5) singles singing in June.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. counties	3	3	2	3	4	5	7	6	5	9	12
No. localities	6	4	2	3	7	6	14	14	7	12	19
No. singing	12	10	3	4	18	10	21	21	14	14	31

An excellent year, with record numbers of both localities and singing males, as well as counties in which they occurred. In particular, there has never been more than a single report from Wales in any previous year. Proof of breeding was obtained for the second year running for this notoriously difficult species. Studies using a tape lure suggest that there may be more birds present than is indicated by the numbers heard singing.

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

62 'localities': 1-487 pairs breeding.

A national census was organised in 1993. The following county totals of individuals are taken from R. E. Green (1995, *Bird Study* 42: 66-75), with the addition of a further six records received by the Panel, all of which fall within Green's census period of 20th May to 10th July.

England, SW DEVON 1, DORSET 1.
England, E SUFFOLK 1.
England, N CHESHIRE 1, CUMBRIA 1, NORTH YORKSHIRE 3, SOUTH YORKSHIRE 1.
Wales DYFED 1.
Isle of Man 1.
Scotland S BORDERS 3, CENTRAL 2, DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY 1, STRATHCLYDE - AYRSHIRE 2.
Scotland, Mid GRAMPIAN 3, TAYSIDE 1.
Scotland, N & W HIGHLAND - CAITHNESS 7, HIGHLAND - NAIRN 1, HIGHLAND - ROSS & CROMARTY 1, HIGHLAND - SUTHERLAND 1, HIGHLAND - INNER HEBRIDES 14, STRATHCLYDE - INNER HEBRIDES 158, STRATHCLYDE - ARGYLL 2, ORKNEY 6, SHETLAND 3, WESTERN ISLES 271.

The census carried out in 1993 revealed a further very steep decline in numbers, these having fallen by at least 17% since the previous census in 1988.

Management based on the most recent research into the needs of the species, before and during the breeding season, is now being applied widely in the Inner Hebrides and Western Isles by the RSPB, aided by grants from Scottish Natural Heritage and with the support of the Scottish Crofters Union. Early results are encouraging and suggest that numbers can be sustained and increased with appropriate farming methods. What is needed now is much wider and urgent application of these conservation measures throughout the past and current range of the Corn Crake.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

One extensive locality.

United Kingdom Three pairs bred, but no young were reared.

This small population continues to attempt to breed, but no young have been reared in any of the last five years.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Two localities; pair attempted to breed.

England, N Two localities, but the same individuals involved: adult and two immatures displayed and 'scraped' during 22nd April to 31st May, before moving to a new site (Frodsham, Cheshire), where four eggs were laid, but were then taken by a predator during a spell of cold, wet weather.

This species has not featured in these reports since 1988, when a pair displayed and copulated. In 1987, a pair bred successfully, the only previous instance having been in 1945 (*Brit. Birds* 38: 322-328). There was a failed breeding attempt in 1983.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

25 localities: 436-511 pairs reared a minimum of 347 young.

England, SE 13 localities

ESSEX Five localities: (1) 18 pairs bred, at least eight young reared; (2) 16 pairs bred, fledging appeared to be good; (3) 11 pairs bred, 30 young reared; (4) six pairs reared 15 young at a new site; (5) one pair in suitable habitat.

KENT Seven localities: (1) 62 pairs reared 66 young; (2) 19 pairs bred, 17 were successful, ten young but no full count; (3) 13 pairs, but only three bred, two young seen; (4) at least seven pairs raised a minimum of eight young; (5) two pairs, one bred; (6) four pairs, but high water levels and predation prevented successful breeding; (7) pair may have bred.

SUSSEX One locality: two in May and June, but no evidence of breeding.

England, E 12 localities

NORFOLK Eight localities: (1) 48 pairs raised 42 young; (2) 46 pairs, of which 16 thought to have bred, rearing up to 20 young; (3) 29 pairs bred, rearing up to 40 young; (4) 23 pairs bred, but all young killed by Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*; (5) nine pairs, but no details of breeding; (6) five pairs reared 18 young; (7) two pairs, of which one nested, but reared no young; (8) up to 22 in May, pair nested, but reared no young .

SOUTH HUMBERSIDE One locality: three pairs, but not known if they bred.

SUFFOLK Three localities: (1) 90 pairs bred, but only three young fledged; (2) 70 pairs bred, hatching 107 young, of which 44 fledged; (3) 20 pairs raised a minimum of 20 young. Two more localities which have been used in previous years dried out early and were not occupied.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	9	11	14	15	18	27	24	21	21	29	25
Confirmed (pairs)	238	237	269	255	341	389	521	355	448	492	436
Young reared (min.)	192	118	245	227	315	136	150	200	305	336	347

A further slight improvement in productivity per pair, though still quite low compared with what was achieved in the mid 1980s.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Eight counties: 146-162 pairs.

England, SW and SE Five counties: 57 pairs, of which 49 were confirmed as breeding, fledging 42-45 young.

England, E Three counties: 105 pairs, of which 97 were confirmed as breeding, fledging 59 young.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Confirmed (pairs)	20	19	68	103	137	126	126	139	139	155	146
Possible (pairs)	76	52	47	12	0	3	17	10	16	4	16
Max. total pairs	96	71	115	115	137	129	143	149	155	159	162

The first decline in the number of pairs confirmed breeding for some years, though the total number of pairs rose slightly. Productivity was a little better in the Southwest and the Southeast compared with 1992, but fell in eastern England. A valuable summary of the monitoring of Stone-curlew numbers and breeding success in the period 1986-91 has recently been published (Green, 1995, *Britain's Birds in 1991-92*: 138-141) and the Panel wishes to thank Dr Rhys Green, RSPB, for his assistance in compiling the data for 1993.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

One locality: one pair breeding (excluding those in main Scottish breeding area).

England, N One locality.

CUMBRIA One locality: pair laid, but failed, reason not known.

Scotland No records were received from areas away from the main breeding area.

The Panel seeks records only if away from the main breeding range, which lies north of a line from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Tay, and accepts that at least some of the Dotterels on hilltops in southern Scotland and northern England will be on passage. This species was the subject of an intensive survey during 1987 and 1988, the results of which have recently been published (Galbraith *et al.*, 1993, *Bird Study* 40: 161-169), showing that the population may be as high as 840 pairs, with a wider distribution than had previously been thought. The estimated British total included three pairs in England and Wales and seven in southern Scotland.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One locality: two pairs bred, one successfully.

Scotland, N & W One locality: adult with two young at traditional site, and second adult present; second pair probably attempted to breed, but failed at egg stage.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Number of localities	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	0	1	4	2	2	1	0	1	2
Possible (pairs)	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1
Max. total pairs	2	1	2	3	5	3	3	2	3	2	3

This species still clings on in its one traditional site. A recent paper by Dr G. P. Mudge & Roy H. Dennis summarised the history of breeding in Britain by this species (*Brit. Birds* 88: 573-577).

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*
One locality: one pair bred.
Scotland, N & W One locality: one pair raised at least one young.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Number of localities	1	1	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1
Confirmed (pairs)	0	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	3	1	1
Possible (pairs)	1	1	2	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	0
Max. total pairs	1	2	3	2	3	2	4	1	4	2	1

This species, like the last, continues to hang on as a breeding bird, just.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*
Ten localities; no proof of breeding, though copulation and possible breeding at one locality and lekking noted at six others.
England, SE Three localities.
KENT Two localities: (1) up to five males and ten females, with lekking noted in May; (2) up to six in June and five in July.
SUSSEX One locality: male in breeding plumage on 23rd June.
England, E Five localities.
CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) up to nine males and 26 females from 29th March to 19th May, with some lekking observed; (2) up to 39, with some lekking.
SUFFOLK Three localities: (1) three males and three females in early spring, lekking reported; (2) one male and six females in May, some lekking; (3) male and female during June.
England, N Two localities.
CHESHIRE One locality: three males and two females lekking during 5th to 13th May, but departed by 17th.
NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: four males and two females on 16th May, lekking and copulation noted. Although laying by one or two females was suspected, heavy rain flooded the area and the birds departed.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	8	6	8	7	16	14	15	8	9	21	10
Nests	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	7	0	0
Max. no. females possibly nesting	32	6	8	9	69	11	17	15	15	12	59

No proof of breeding was obtained, for the second year running, though there was a strong suspicion of breeding at one locality. The number of localities was lower than last year's peak, but there was more lekking reported which involved many more individuals.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*
16 localities: 28-33 pairs breeding.
England, SW Two localities.
SOMERSET Two localities: (1) two pairs displaying on 25th May, but apparently no attempt to breed; (2) two pairs, which departed by early June either not having nested or having rapidly lost their eggs to a predator.

England, SE Five localities.
ESSEX Two localities: (1) 15 adults summered in suitable habitat, but no breeding evidence; (2) at least seven adults summered in suitable habitat, but no breeding evidence.
KENT Three localities: (1) four pairs bred, but only one young fledged; (2) three pairs, two of which are thought to have bred, one nest found, but no young fledged; (3) one pair raised one young.
England, E Seven localities.
CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) 14 pairs attempted to breed, ten young fledged; (2) six pairs bred, six young fledged.
SUFFOLK Five localities: (1)-(5) no breeding or breeding behaviour reported, but counts of up to 110, 83, 30, seven and four summering, respectively.
England, N One locality.
CHESHIRE One locality: maximum of 467 in April, declining to 230-250 in May and June, and up to 420 in July. Occasional display flighting, but no other signs of breeding.
Scotland, N & W One locality.
SHETLAND One locality: one pair bred, raising two young.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	10	12	11	19	13	17	14	16	18	24	16
Confirmed (pairs)	32	55	22	23	28	36	34	33	28	20	28
Possible (pairs)	12	25	17	24	12	28	22	33	25	38	5
Max. total pairs	44	80	39	47	40	64	56	66	53	58	33

Although there was a sharp drop in the number of localities, with no records from the several new sites reported from Shetland last year, the total of confirmed pairs recovered from last year's poor showing. The number of possible pairs dropped sharply, however. The numbers summering in flocks in apparently suitable habitat also continue to increase. Almost all the breeding pairs are on National Nature Reserves or reserves belonging to the RSPB.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

One locality: one pair displaying.
England, N One locality: pair on 3rd May engaged in display flight.

This is a new species for these reports and, while the observation, which was made on the coast, may have little significance, it is worth putting on record. Small numbers summer in several parts of Britain and, while the majority are clearly in their first summer, a few do attain something approaching breeding plumage.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

No reports away from Orkney and Shetland.

For the second year running, no reports were received from areas away from the regular breeding area in the Northern Isles. We repeat our appeal for records of summering or displaying elsewhere in Britain.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Four localities: 2-8 pairs bred.
Scotland, N & W Four localities: (1) two pairs and a fifth adult, both pairs bred successfully, but number of young not known; (2)(3) two pairs at each locality, but no definite proof of breeding; (4) pair displaying on 8th May, none on 25th, but single feeding and briefly displaying on 13th June.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	3	4	3	2	3	4	6	2	2	4	4
Confirmed (pairs)	1	4	2	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	2
Possible (pairs)	4	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	5	6
Max. total pairs	5	5	3	3	4	4	6	2	2	6	8

The best year for the total number of pairs possibly breeding since 1980. Monitoring of known sites continued at the higher level achieved in 1992.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

No reports received.

After last year's reappearance in suitable breeding habitat, following a gap of 15 years, the species again failed to show any evidence suggestive of breeding.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Two localities: 20-24 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) a complex of five sites with 18-22 pairs breeding and 48-50 young hatched; (2) two pairs bred, one raising three young, but the second failed after the male was killed by hitting a fence.

Although numbers held up well at the principal locality on Fetlar, Shetland, and a new one was discovered, two previously regular breeding sites were unoccupied.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

14 localities: 15-32 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities: (1) five pairs bred, but no information is available on their success; (2) pair from 7th March to 9th April, but not apparently thereafter.

England, SE Six localities: (1) four pairs, of which three bred successfully, hatching six young; (2) three pairs raised three young and a fourth pair failed; (3)(4) single pairs each raised two young; (5) five adults displaying in March, only two in April and one until July; (6) two immatures, in April and May.

England, E Four localities: (1) adult male bred with female Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*, but outcome unknown, two other adults and a pair of second-summer hybrids also, the latter apparently nesting in April, but nests disturbed or destroyed by fishermen; (2) pair laid one egg, but nest destroyed by Black-headed Gull; (3)(4) single pairs prospecting.

England, Central One locality; male from 22nd April to 8th May apparently trying to claim territory in Black-headed Gull colony.

England, N One locality: pair of second-summers held territory from 24th April to 1st May, displayed and copulated.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	6	4	3	5	3	9	5	10	13	15	14
Confirmed (pairs)	2	4	3	1	1	5	6	11	15	19	15
Possible (pairs)	6	1	5	4	2	10	3	5	8	12	17
Max. total pairs	8	5	8	5	3	15	9	16	23	31	32

A very similar year to last year, though with more hybrid pairs, and more hybrids, reported.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

One locality: none bred.

England, SE One locality: adult in winter plumage from 4th June, first-summer from 19th June and adult in summer plumage from 11th July, all to end of July.

In keeping with past policy, we are recording these occasional summering individuals and appeal for all observations to be sent in.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

No reports received.

Were last year's possibly territory-holding pair and the one paired with a Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* a flash in the pan?

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

One locality: one female mated with Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis.*

England, N One locality.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: female mated to Sandwich Tern, intermittently from 3rd May to 8th August, seen copulating on 31st May, but no further breeding evidence.

What has been assumed to be the same individual also appeared in Borders on 16th May, North Humberside during 15th-20th June, Lincolnshire on 20th June, and Norfolk on 8th to 15th and 21st July, 11th and 22nd August. On each occasion, it was noted as being paired with a colour-ringed Sandwich Tern, and copulation was observed in Lincolnshire (*Brit. Birds* 87: 533; 88: 520).

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

18 localities: 84-105 pairs breeding.

England, SW Seven localities.

HAMPSHIRE One locality: two pairs, an additional adult and one subadult, a scrape made, but no eggs laid.

UNNAMED COUNTY Six localities: (1) 18 adults, three pairs bred, raising six young; (2) three pairs, of which two bred successfully, raising four young; (3) three pairs, of which two bred successfully, two young fledged; (4) two pairs bred, one nest failed, two young reared; (5)(6) single pairs bred, each raising two young.

England, SE Three localities: (1) up to two in May and June, but no suggestion of breeding; (2) single in May and June; (3) single in July and August.

England, N Two localities: (1) up to 33 pairs bred, raising 35 young; (2) three pairs raised six young.

Wales Three localities: (1) 16 pairs bred, 28 young produced; (2) five pairs raised seven young; (3) pair and a third adult, but did not breed.

Scotland, Mid Three localities: (1) 19 pairs, 18 of which laid, but only 14 young hatched; (2) pair bred, apparently successfully; (3) up to three displaying.

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Number of localities	10	13	17	15	13	15	18
Confirmed (pairs)	169	164	172	93	52	62	84
Possible (pairs)	164	33	5	31	5	10	21
Max. total pairs	333	197	177	124	57	72	105

The Panel began full monitoring of this species only in 1987. There has been a marked improvement in the number of pairs over the last two years, though fledging success was poor in some colonies.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

Two main localities: two females.

Scotland, N & W Two main localities.

SHETLAND Only one female for certain, turning up at several locations between 29th April and 18th September.

WESTERN ISLES A female was in a number of places between 16th April and 2nd August. A first-year male on St Kilda on 11th April was presumably a migrant.

There were no reports from the Highland region this year, but the lengthy presence of one in the Western Isles is of interest. There have, however, been no reports of any adult males since 1979.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Six localities: 1-6 pairs bred.

England, E One locality: single on 13th June.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: (1) one singing in early June; (2) one in mid July.

Scotland, N & W Three localities: (1) pair bred and reared young, though number not recorded; (2) single singing in two places on 28th and 29th May; (3) single singing during 28th-30th May.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	14	9	9	9	10	9	8	6	6	1	6
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1
Possible (pairs)	15	10	8	8	9	9	7	6	5	2	5
Max. total pairs	15	10	9	9	10	10	8	6	6	2	6

A small, but welcome, improvement on last year's very poor result, including a renewed, if slight, presence in eastern England.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

213-621 pairs breeding.

England, SW 145-217 pairs breeding.

DEVON Two localities: (1) pair and six singing males; (2) singing male.

DORSET Eight localities: (1) at least ten singing males or pairs present; (2) pair raised two young; (3) two singing males; (4)-(8) single pairs or singing males present.

HAMPSHIRE New Forest not fully covered, but 83 pairs located, plus a further 26 singing males; up to 82 pairs or singing males at a further 28 localities in the county.

WILTSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) single pairs each rearing two young.

England, SE 24-105 pairs breeding.

BERKSHIRE Five localities: (1)-(5) total of six pairs bred, 12 further pairs, nine singing males and a single.

KENT Two localities: (1)(2) total of two pairs bred, plus five singing males.

SURREY 15 localities: (1)-(15) total of 13 pairs bred, 20 further pairs and 19 singing males.

SUSSEX Ten localities: (1)-(10) total of three breeding pairs, eight further pairs and six singing males.

England, E 118-313 pairs breeding.

NORFOLK Nine localities: (1)-(9) total of at least 15 pairs bred, plus a further 28 pairs and one singing male.

SOUTH HUMBERSIDE Four localities: (1)-(4) one pair bred, plus three pairs and six singing males.

SUFFOLK Over 20 localities or areas surveyed, with totals of up to 225 breeding pairs, other pairs and singing males.

England, Central Two localities.

UNNAMED COUNTY Three sites within one broad locality: one pair laid twice, the first clutch was taken by a predator, the second produced five fledged young; the other two pairs were not proved to breed.

Scotland, N & W One locality: singing male from 23rd June to 4th July, two, possibly three, individuals later.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Number of counties	8	9	13	11	12	10	14	12	14	13
Confirmed (pairs)	16	5	47	28	88	156	64	39	124	213
Possible (pairs)	185	122	181	165	157	54	272	303	535	408
Max. total pairs	201	127	228	193	245	210	336	362	659	621

Further intensive survey work in Suffolk found fewer than in 1992, but there were more found in Hampshire and elsewhere in England. Scotland's first breeding record was suspected, but not proven.

This is the first time that a table has been published for this species. The recent substantial increases are in part due to more intensive survey work, but at the same time the range is expanding and a general increase taking place.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

One locality: one singing male.

Scotland, N & W One locality: male in song at Helendale, Lerwick, Shetland, on 20th May (*Brit. Birds* 87: 546).

A new species for the Panel's reports. The Panel is keen to monitor occurrences of all species that show even slight signs of breeding behaviour.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

53 localities: 32-76 pairs breeding.

England, SW Four localities.

DORSET Two localities: (1) pair bred successfully; (2) juvenile on 5th July had, perhaps, been bred locally.

HAMPSHIRE Two localities: (1) female from 6th July to 13th August, male with food on 23rd July; (2) territory-holding male from 11th to 19th June.

England, SE 25 localities.

BERKSHIRE Three localities: (1) pair raised three young; (2) pair raised three young; (3) singing male April to June and August.

ESSEX One locality: one.

HERTFORDSHIRE Three localities: (1) pair raised at least three young; (2) singing male, no date; (3) immature in June.

KENT Five localities: (1) four pairs, of which three certainly bred, rearing at least 12 young; (2) four pairs, of which three certainly bred; (3) pair raised two young; (4) singing male from 9th to 11th June; (5) female on 6th June.

LONDON Nine localities: (1) pair raised broods of four and three; (2) pair probably bred in area used in past years; (3) pair probably bred in area where two or three pairs have bred annually; (4) pair on 5th April; (5)-(8) single singing males in June; (9) female in March and April.

SURREY Two localities: (1) pair raised at least one young; (2) female in suitable habitat.

SUSSEX Two localities: (1) two singing males and female in May; (2) singing male on 9th June.

England, E Ten localities.

LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: two singing males in June.

NORFOLK Two localities: (1) two pairs bred successfully; (2) two singing males in June.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One locality: pair present; also reported to have bred here in 1992, which is an addition to that year's report.

SUFFOLK Six localities: (1) three pairs raised a total of four broods; (2) three pairs bred; (3) one pair raised two broods each of two young, second pair raised brood of three young, five males reported in June; (4) three pairs, of which one bred; (5) pair fledged three young; (6) three singing males.

England, Central Eight localities.

DERBYSHIRE Two localities: (1) pair from early April throughout summer, pair with one or two juveniles in September; (2) male in summer plumage.

LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: pair raised five young.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: two singing males in June.
WEST MIDLANDS One locality: pair had two broods and fledged three or four young.
STAFFORDSHIRE Three localities: (1)(2) single females in mid April, probably passing through and possibly the same individual; (3) immature male on 10th July.
England, N Six localities.
GREATER MANCHESTER Five localities: (1) pair with four young on 20th July; (2) pair feeding young in early October; (3) singing male from 1st to 30th May; (4) singing male on 30th May and 14th June; (5) female on 21st and 24th April.
YORKSHIRE One locality: pair bred.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	92	77	70	56	50	36	44	53
Confirmed (pairs)	81	46	54	36	28	23	14	32
Possible (pairs)	38	63	58	46	46	46	57	44
Max. total pairs	119	109	118	82	74	69	71	76

A welcome increase in both the number of localities and the number of confirmed breeding pairs, though both are well below the levels of even five years ago. There has been a return to southwest England, as well as to Berkshire. Numbers in the West Midlands were disappointingly low, but may reflect reduced searching rather than a genuine decline.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Five localities: 2-5 pairs breeding.
England, SE Two localities.
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: adult being investigated by a pair of Mistle Thrushes *T. viscivorus* on 4th June.
HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: single on 22nd May.
Scotland, N & W Three localities.
INVERNESS Two localities: (1) nest containing three large young on 1st July; (2) pair probably bred at site where the species is reported to have done so since the mid 1980s, though this has not always been noted in these reports (where details have been made available, these are included in the table below).
SHETLAND One locality: pair bred at same site as in 1992, raising six young.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	10	4	3	2	7	7	12	12	13	7	5
Confirmed (pairs)	3	0	0	2	1	2	3	5	2	2	2
Possible (pairs)	9	4	3	0	6	5	10	7	11	8	3
Max. total pairs	12	4	3	2	7	7	13	12	13	11	5

The poorest year since 1986. Are we at the bottom of some kind of cycle, as in the mid 1980s? Certainly the scattered sightings in northern and eastern England have virtually ceased in the last two years, leaving just the hard core of breeding pairs in Scotland. Coverage for this species remains difficult, however, especially in the remoter parts of Scotland, and this may well be contributing to some of the fluctuations.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

22 localities: 5-27 pairs breeding.
Scotland, Mid One locality: two singing males at neighbouring sites in the second half of May.
Scotland, N & W 21 localities: (1) pair raised a total of five young from two broods; (2)(3)

pairs each raised three or four young; (4) three singing males, single fledged young seen; (5) at least one pair probably bred at this regular site; (6) pair attempted to breed, but failed; (7) pair at usual site; (8) three singing males; (9)-(21) single singing males in April and/or May.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	65	58	35	32	39	22	38	17	15	13	22
Confirmed (pairs)	17	31	12	20	9	10	12	6	7	9	5
Possible (pairs)	51	48	23	26	41	30	39	15	13	15	22
Max. total pairs	68	79	35	46	50	49	51	21	20	24	27

The slight recovery noticed last year continues, coupled with a welcome increase in the number of localities. The species remains badly under-recorded, however, in much of western and northern Scotland, where local observers believe that the population is substantially larger than the 40-80 pairs estimated for the whole of Britain by Gibbons *et al.* (1993, *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland 1988-1991*).

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

About 86 localities: 11-317 breeding 'pairs'.
England, SW About 60 localities in eight counties: 9-243 'pairs' breeding.
England, SE Eight localities in five counties: 2-21 'pairs' breeding.
England, E Eight localities in five counties: 0-30 'pairs' breeding.
England, Central One locality: 0-1 'pair' breeding.
Wales Nine localities in two counties: 0-22 'pairs' breeding.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. counties	13	13	13	11	14	14	15	21	17	18	21
Confirmed ('pairs')	90	78	59	4	31	24	12	19	27	15	11
Possible ('pairs')	157	238	190	175	156	174	196	326	214	273	306
Max. total 'pairs'	247	316	249	179	187	198	208	345	241	298	317

A continued recovery from the low point in 1991, though still not quite back to the peak of 1990. The use of the word 'pairs' is normal in these reports, but does not reflect the true situation for this markedly polygynous species, the females of which are extremely elusive.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Five localities: 4-8 pairs breeding.
England, SE Two localities.
KENT One locality: two pairs bred, no further details.
SUSSEX One locality: at least one pair probably bred, two juveniles ringed in July/August.
England, E Three localities.
NORFOLK One locality: singing male in June.
SUFFOLK Two localities: (1) two pairs bred, third male not thought to have attracted a mate; (2) singing male in early June.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	12	10	12	9	16	10	13	5	13	13	5
Confirmed (pairs)	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	4
Possible (pairs)	15	12	14	11	20	13	17	9	16	20	4
Max. total pairs	17	12	15	12	20	13	17	10	16	22	8

After a couple of good years, there has been a considerable decline, especially in the number of localities, with only a single record in Norfolk and two elsewhere in eastern England. This is the lowest total of confirmed and possible pairs since 1975.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

15 localities: 12-58 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality: singing male 7th to 20th June, possibly also a female present.

England, SE Nine localities: (1)-(9) total of seven pairs bred, a further eight pairs probably bred, while five pairs possibly did so; a further 14 singing males were also recorded.

England, E One locality: singing male reported.

England, Central Two localities.

WORCESTERSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) total of five pairs bred successfully and there were a further 10-13 singing males.

England, N One locality: two singing males.

Scotland, N & W One locality: male singing on 30th May.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	26	28	23	18	11	13	10	12	15	13	15
Confirmed (pairs)	3	4	2	12	10	6	11	13	9	9	12
Possible (pairs)	53	47	40	16	11	14	11	11	23	26	46
Max. total pairs	56	51	42	28	21	20	22	24	32	35	58

A significant, and very welcome, increase in the number of localities, confirmed pairs and possible pairs, with the total pairs at its second highest level since the Panel began its monitoring in 1973, exceeded only by the 74 recorded in 1982. Not only is the Worcestershire population beginning to recover, but there has been a good spread of records from elsewhere, including a further one from Scotland. At a different locality in Scotland, there was also what may have been a breeding record, but one which has been concluded as unproven, so not included above. The *Orkney Bird Report for 1993* records that two adult warblers, thought at the time to be Marsh, were trapped and ringed in July, with one of them subsequently carrying food and behaving in an agitated manner. Three juvenile warblers were trapped in August at the same site. Subsequent analysis of wing measurements and wing formulae concluded, however, that, while the first adult fell within the range of Marsh Warbler, the second adult came within the Marsh Warbler/Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* overlap zone. The measurements of the three juveniles were similarly inconclusive, probably because their wing feathers were not fully grown.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Four localities: four singing males, one carrying nest material (*Brit. Birds* 87: 553; 88: 538-539).

England, SE Two localities: (1) singing male at Elmley, Kent, from 27th May to 3rd July, carrying nest material on 29th May and again, 750 m away, on 16th June; (2) singing male at Lydd, Kent, on 23rd May.

England, E Two localities: (1) singing male at Minsmere, Suffolk, on 28th-29th May; (2) singing male at Titchwell, Norfolk, from 11th to 17th June.

This is the fourth consecutive year in which this species has been reported to the Panel and the total is the highest reported in a single year. One wonders whether the Elmley male may have been building nests for a highly secretive, unobserved female.

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*

One locality: one singing male.

Scotland, S One locality.

LOTHIAN One locality: singing male from 23rd to 27th May at St Abb's Head (*Brit. Birds* 87: 554).

This is the second consecutive year that this species has been included in the Panel's reports and, while perhaps of little significance, it is notable that, of the three individuals which have reached Britain, two have decided to sing.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

93-1,146 pairs breeding.

England, SW County maxima:

CORNWALL 3, DEVON 135, DORSET 221, HAMPSHIRE (including ISLE OF WIGHT) over 694, SOMERSET 2, WILTSHIRE 2.

England, SE County maxima:

BERKSHIRE 4, SURREY 71, SUSSEX 13.

England, E County maxima:

SUFFOLK 1.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. counties	6	6	5	5	8	6	5	8	8	7	11
Confirmed (pairs)	14	11	26	15	8	26	23	55	67	63	93
Possible (pairs)	134	429	368	293	239	616	499	873	634	863	1053
Max. total pairs	148	440	394	308	247	639	522	928	701	926	1146

The major increase in records continues, with more counties now within the range of the species. Especially notable was the singing male in Suffolk, the first such recent record for eastern England. Although some of the increase will be the result of improved coverage, there is a real underlying trend. A full census of the species took place in 1994, which will reveal the true situation.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*

One locality: one singing male, carried nest material.

England, E One locality.

NORFOLK One locality: singing male at Blakeney Point from 27th May to 1st June, also carrying nest material (*Brit. Birds* 87: 556).

This is the first spring record for Britain and the first time the species has figured in the Panel's reports. This individual was subject to organised and extensive disturbance, particularly on 30th May, by birdwatchers, who should certainly have known better and who took no notice of requests from a member of the Panel to leave the bird alone.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Three localities: three singing males (*Brit. Birds* 87: 556-558; 88: 541).

England, SW One locality.

DORSET One locality: singing male at Verne Common on 1st June.

England, SE Two localities.

KENT Two localities: (1) two singing males at Folkestone Warren from 15th June to 1st July; (2) singing male at St Margaret's Bay on 12th June.

This is the second consecutive year that this species has appeared in these reports and, although a reduction on last year's eight, the trend for spring arrivals continues, as it does for them to sing whilst here.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

20 localities: 3-28 pairs breeding.

England, SW 11 localities.

DEVON Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males in March.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE Two localities: (1) singing male from 23rd May to 5th June; (2) singing male on 3rd May.

HAMPSHIRE Six localities: (1) pair bred, two other singing males; (2) pair with four young; (3) pair in summer; (4)-(6) single singing males.

WILTSHIRE One locality: pair with fledged young, plus five singing males.

England, SE Six localities.

BERKSHIRE One locality: singing male on 5th June.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: at least two in May and June.

ESSEX One locality: male singing in May where has bred in past.

KENT One locality: pair probably bred.

SURREY One locality: singing male on 3rd May, perhaps a migrant.

SUSSEX One locality: pair displaying on 28th May.

England, E Two localities.

SUFFOLK Two localities: (1) pair, nest-building noted; (2) singing male on 18th-19th June.

England, Central One locality.

DERBYSHIRE One locality: singing male on 3rd June.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	75	47	24	19	37	44	52	48	19	15	20
Confirmed (pairs)	6	4	5	1	8	11	19	9	2	3	3
Possible (pairs)	169	78	41	28	74	72	112	88	20	16	25
Max. total pairs	175	82	46	29	82	83	131	97	22	19	28

A slightly better picture than in either of the two previous years. Information from the New Forest, Hampshire, is still very incomplete.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

Two localities: two individuals (*Brit. Birds* 87: 559-560).

England, E Two localities.

NORFOLK One locality: male at Titchwell from 23rd to 28th April.

SUFFOLK One locality: male at Minsmere on 25th July.

In view of last year's appearance of a bird with a brood patch, it seems worth recording these spring and summer records even though there were no signs of any breeding behaviour.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

33 localities: 14-33 pairs breeding.

England, SE Four localities: (1)(2) single singing males; (3) single male seen; (4) female seen.

England, E 39 localities surveyed, of which 11 held no orioles, and a minimum of 13 breeding pairs found, which fledged at least 23 young. Six other pairs probably bred, there were singing males at five sites and singles at four more.

Scotland, Mid One locality: pair bred at a site where they have apparently done so for the last five years.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	14	11	12	13	22	35	29	38	27	37	33
Confirmed (pairs)	2	4	4	5	11	16	15	10	16	14	14
Possible (pairs)	19	14	11	11	20	25	22	32	12	23	19
Max. total pairs	21	18	15	17	31	41	37	42	28	37	33

A very similar picture to last year's, though the number of young known to have fledged in eastern England has dropped from a maximum of 30 in 1992. (The Panel is most grateful for the detailed information on the eastern England population supplied by the Golden Oriole Group.)

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Six localities: 0-6 pairs breeding.

England, SE Two localities: (1)(2) one at one site on 1st June and two, possibly a pair, at the second on 4th and 5th June; perhaps only two, rather than three, individuals involved.

England, E Three localities: (1)-(3) two single males and a single female at three different sites on single dates only.

Scotland, N & W One locality: male on 28th May in suitable habitat.

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
No. localities	3	4	7	3	8	6	3	7	5	13	6
Confirmed (pairs)	11	6	6	4	2	1	0	1	1	1	0
Possible (pairs)	1	4	6	2	11	6	6	7	4	12	6
Max. total pairs	12	10	12	6	13	7	6	8	5	13	6

A very poor showing, with no confirmed breeding records and low numbers of localities and pairs, and so especially disappointing after the better numbers last year.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Correction to 1991 Report.

The report of an adult summering Great Grey Shrike in Suffolk in 1991 included the observer's comment that it was probably of the Iberian race *L. e. meridionalis*. At that time, the details had not been submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee. Subsequent consideration by the Committee led to the conclusion that, while the bird was undoubtedly a Great Grey Shrike, there was insufficient evidence on which to base the racial identification.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Two localities: 1-2 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S One locality: female paired to male Chaffinch *F. coelebs* and singing male Brambling nearby on 29th April, but not subsequently; habitat thought suitable.

Scotland, N & W One locality: pair on 16th June, the female collecting food.

The Scottish pair in June can be assumed to have been breeding, the first case since 1988.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Two localities: 0-2 pairs.

England, SW One locality.

HAMPSHIRE One locality: singing male from 28th May to 30th June.

England, SE One locality.

KENT One locality: singing male on 31st May and 1st June.

A second successive poor year, with again none in Devon, the former stronghold for the species.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Six localities: 0-7 pairs breeding.

England, SE Two localities: (1) pair on 28th May; (2) single on 2nd June.
England, E One locality: singing male in full summer plumage on 27th May.
Scotland, Mid One locality: adult male singing from 1st to 4th June, female or immature 2 km away on 11th.
Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) adult male singing from 14th to 20th June in suitable habitat; (2) first-summer male singing and holding territory on 9th June.

A disappointingly poor showing after last year's prediction that the species was here to stay; perhaps, however, this is only a temporary gap in the expected colonisation.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Two main localities: up to 19 pairs probably breeding.
Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) 15 males and 16 females located, an increase of one male and two females over 1992; (2) one male and three females reported.

These reports come mainly from surveys of two areas carried out as part of a study of the species. Details of the breeding seasons and nesting success arising from this study have recently been published (Smith & Marquiss, 1994, *Scot. Birds* 17: 323-334).

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

92-361 breeding pairs.
England, SW
CORNWALL Five localities: (1)-(3) total of three pairs bred, but two probably failed owing to poor weather, and the fate of the third was unknown; (4)(5) single males, one in March, the other in June.
DEVON 356 occupied territories found during a thorough survey. Of these, 90 held pairs which were confirmed as breeding, a further 123 probably did so, while in the remaining 143 territories there was a possibility that breeding occurred. The 31 pairs monitored produced 3.9 fledged young per pair, a 47% success rate, most failures coming during periods of heavy rain in June and July.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Confirmed (pairs)	36	48	98	113	92
Possible (pairs)	83	85	143	207	269
Max. total pairs	119	133	241	320	361

The table shows the increase in numbers since Dr Andy Evans, RSPB, began his study in 1989. Whilst some of the increase is due to greater recording effort, the RSPB has been quick to implement management measures, including habitat creation, based on Dr Evans' findings, which have already made a considerable contribution. The habitat creation and detailed survey work by the RSPB continues, to the great benefit of this species, which will be featured in a forthcoming paper in *British Birds* by Dr Andy Evans.

Dr M. A. Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN

REVIEWS

Ornithološki Atlas Slovenije.

By Iztok Geister. Illustrated by Mark Hulme.

DZS, Ljubljana, 1995. 287 pages; 31 colour plates; 219 line-drawings; 219 distribution maps. ISBN 86-341-1252-7. US$82.64.

Zimski Ornithološki Atlas Slovenije.

By Andrej Sovinc. Illustrated by Slavko Polak.

Tehniška založba Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1994. 452 pages; 192 line-drawings; 192 distribution maps. ISBN 86-365-0160-1. DM.100 [+ p&p].

These are *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Slovenia* and *The Atlas of Wintering Birds in Slovenia*, based on fieldwork during the five-year periods 1980-84 and 1986/87-1990/91, respectively.

We in Britain are proud of our atlas achievements, based on fieldwork by 10,000-15,000 observers. In the first year of the Slovenian Breeding Bird Atlas 18 observers took part, and in the five years of the project 174 of Slovenia's 244 10×10-km squares were surveyed; by the time of the Wintering Atlas, some 150 observers were involved and all but four of the squares were visited. These two complementary books display the results in the traditional form, with three sizes of dot.

Iztok Geister's Breeding Atlas is the plusher of the two, and provides an excellent background to the pair of books by describing and illustrating (with excellent colour photographs) many of Slovenia's varied habitats, with a 15-page English-language text, followed by a further 11 pages (also in English) on the historical background, organisation of fieldwork, recording method and a summary of the results. These sections are followed by the individual accounts, with one page devoted to each species, including a clear map (the basic outline shows forests in green, rivers in blue and the three sizes of dot in dark brown). These pages are greatly enhanced by line-drawings by Mark Hulme. Unfortunately, the species texts are wholly in the Slovene language (but the maps do 'speak for themselves' and tabular data for each species include not just the numbers and percentage of each size of dot, but also population estimates and categories of population change and range change).

The much thicker Wintering Atlas devotes a double-page spread to each species, although the actual amount of text (again in the Slovene language) is approximately the same (the map is larger and so is the accompanying drawing of the bird). Of especial value to non-Slovene-speaking readers will be the interpretive paragraph in English beneath each map.

Distribution is shown by open blue circles on the grey-shaded outline map. For interpretive purposes, readers of this atlas will find two loose transparent overlays of great use: one shows January temperatures in ranges from –8°C to +4°C and the other 25 vegetational zones (although a little botanical knowledge may be needed to interpret, for instance, *Ostryo-Quercetum pubescentis* and *Lazulo-Abieti-Fagetum praealpinum*). Andrej Sovinc's Winter Atlas lacks the long English-language summary concerning history and methodology, but both atlases state that they have followed the recommended procedures of the former European Ornithological Atlas Committee (now part of the European Bird Census Council).

In summer, the most widespread species are Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, Blackbird *Turdus merula* and Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*. In winter, the most widely distributed are Great Tit *Parus major*, Chaffinch and Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*.

The two authors, the organising committees, and the dedicated band of observers responsible for the fieldwork deserve our congratulations for these two excellent atlases. Anyone with any interest in European atlas studies or in the birds of Slovenia will wish to acquire both.

J. T. R. Sharrock

ALSO RECEIVED

Together They Fly. By Beryl Chapman. (Barnworks Publishing, Pulborough, 1995. 197 pages. ISBN 1-899174-00-1. £4.99)

Where to Watch Birds in Somerset, Avon, Gloucestershire & Wiltshire. By Ken Hall & John Govett. 2nd edn. (Christopher Helm, London, 1995. 280 pages. ISBN 0-7136-4023-5. £12.99)(first edition reviewed *Brit. Birds* 81: 688)

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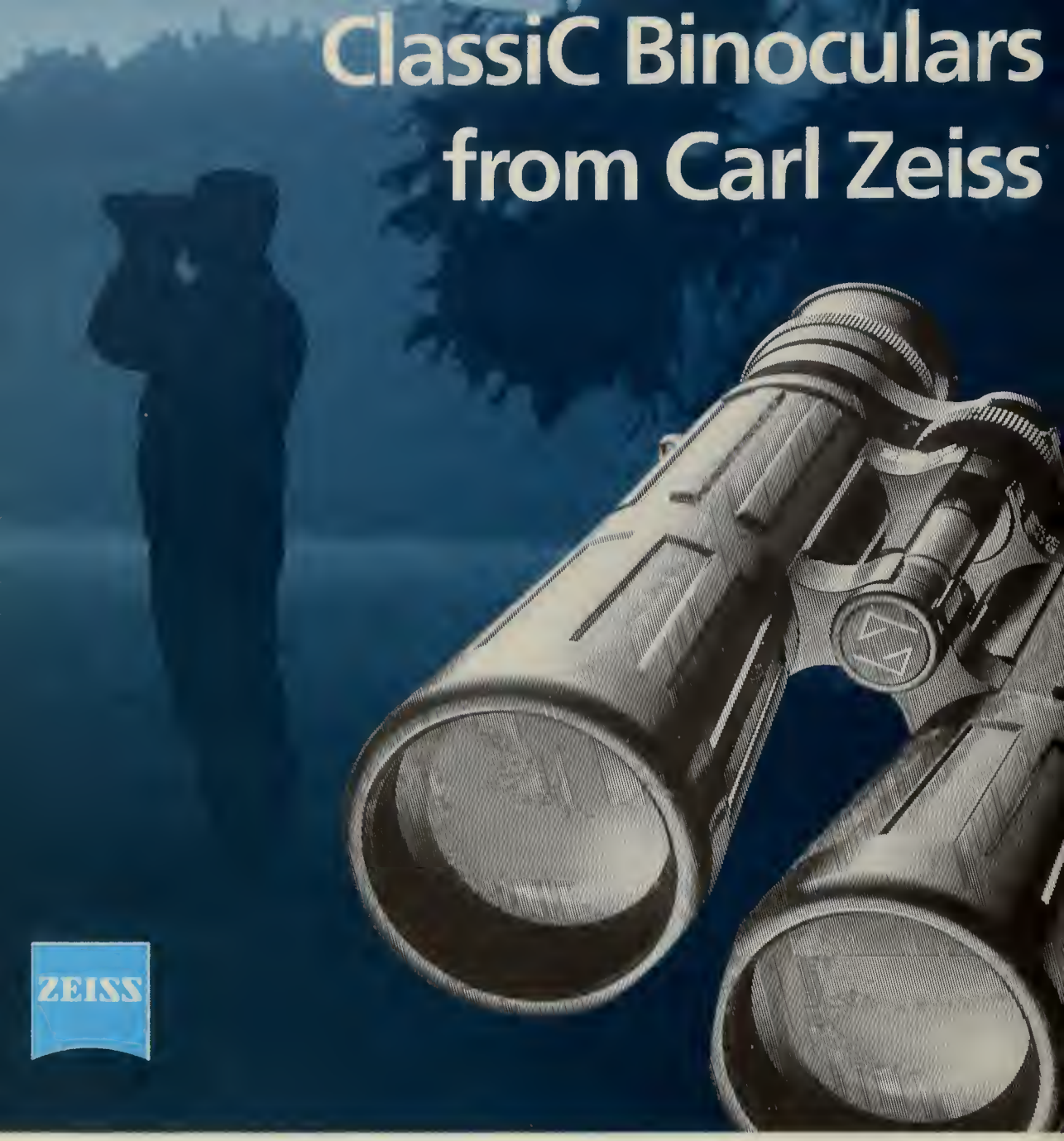
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NOTES

Male Kentish Plovers with complete breast-bands

I read with great interest the paper by Dr Richard Chandler and Hadoram Shirihai (*Brit. Birds* 88: 136-140) concerning female Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* with complete breast-bands. In April 1994, I encountered three similar individual Kentish Plovers in a flock of about 100 on a small mudflat in Osaka Bay, Honshu, Japan. All three were males and all showed complete breast-







Plates 25-27. Two male Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* with complete breast-bands, Japan, April 1994 (*T. Shiota*). Above and below left show the same individual.

bands. I was able to photograph two of the three (plates 25-27). I have seen similar individuals with complete breast-bands at the same location in the past, all of which have been males.

Takeshi Shiota
4-41/3-317 Yamada-Higashi, Suita-Shi, Osaka, Japan (565)

Male Kentish Plover with complete breast-band

Whilst watching waders by the Yamuna River, Delhi, India, on 14th November 1993, I was surprised to find a male Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* with a narrow dark band encircling the breast, joining the typical patches at the breast sides. In other respects, the bird was a typical Kentish Plover, with otherwise clean plumage, suggesting that the band was probably a true feature of its plumage rather than due to soiling. The band was relatively narrow throughout, but was clearly visible and quite striking when viewed head-on.

Steve Madge
2 Church Row, Sheviock, Torpoint, Cornwall PL11 3EH

Two juvenile Peregrine Falcons carrying same prey

On 25th July 1991, at Copperhouse Creek, West Cornwall, I saw two Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* flying very close together at great speed in the direction of the nearby town. A minute or so later, I observed a curious shape flying towards me (fig. 1) and was astonished to discover two juvenile Peregrines both carrying the same prey, a domesticated Rock Dove *Columba livia*: they were flying side by side, slightly angled away from each other, both gripping the back of the pigeon, which was still struggling. They landed fairly heavily in the creek, where the pigeon was quickly dispatched and both falcons fed on the carcase. The flooding tide caused the Peregrines to pull the carcase out of the water several times; they were then joined by a third, larger (presumed female) juvenile, which attempted, unsuccessfully, to lift the carcase from the water. The prey was then abandoned, and all three Peregrines stood in the creek for some 20 minutes before flying off.

L. P. Williams
2 Springfield Close, Phillack, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 5AH

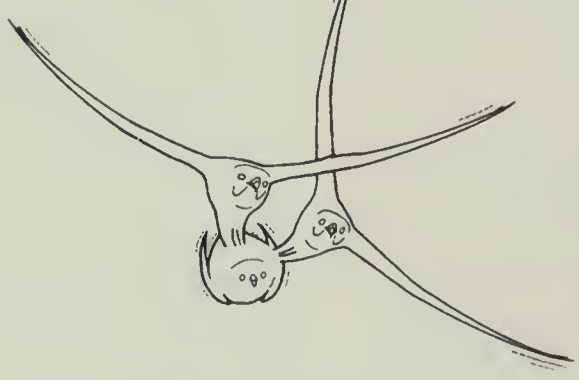


Fig. 1. Stylised drawing of two Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* simultaneously gripping the back of a domesticated Rock Dove *Columba livia* in flight (*redrawn by Robin Prytherch from sketch by L. P. Williams*)

Little Curlew with damaged bill

The records of Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* in Britain reminded me of the following. In the early 1960s, one individual in a regular wintering flock of Little Curlews at Port Moresby airport, Papua New Guinea, had three-quarters of its bill missing. This could be thought a catastrophe for a wader, yet the bird seemed in no difficulty; its plumage, appearance and behaviour were as those of the rest of the flock, and it seemed to be feeding normally. It remained for months.

Mike Freer
11 Keswick Close, Cringleford, Norwich NR4 6UW

EDITORIAL COMMENT We published a paper by D. E. Pomeroy on 'Birds with abnormal bills' in 1962 (*Brit. Birds* 55: 49-72).

Plunge-bathing by Common Redshanks

On 1st September 1985, at a disused chalk-pit at Cliffe, Kent, I noticed a number of Common Redshanks *Tringa totanus* apparently engaged in plunge-bathing. The majority of those in a roost of 50 or more flew a few metres from the spit on which the flock was resting and 'belly-flopped' into the water; immediately after making contact with the surface, each one rejoined the rest of the flock and commenced preening.

Anthony Webb
1 Woolacombe Road, Blackheath, London SE3 8QJ

EDITORIAL COMMENT There are only a few published accounts of this behaviour (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 63: 254), but it appears to be a fairly common method of bathing among waders of the genus *Tringa* and other waterbirds, and is referred to by Glutz & Bauer (*Die Vögel Mitteleuropas*).

Juvenile plumage of European sandgrouse

The juvenile plumages of Europe's two regularly breeding sandgrouse have been described in *BWP* (vol. 4), but the true juvenile plumages are not figured there. Nor does Johnsgard (1991) illustrate the juvenile plumages, his description adding nothing to that in *BWP*. Plates 28 and 29 (see page 96) are perhaps the first illustrations showing these plumages to be published. They show adults of both species accompanied by juveniles and were taken at a water-hole in Extremadura, Spain, in early September 1993. It can be seen from these plates that the juveniles of both sandgrouse species are clearly separable from the adults, *contra* Cramp (1985: 263), where it is stated that the juvenile Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis* 'closely resembles ♀' and is 'scarcely separable'. The juvenile Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *P. alchata*, according to Cramp (1985: 269), has 'no black division between chest and underbody' but, as plate 28 shows, black edges to some of the breast feathers do form an interrupted but distinct black line between the breast and the belly. The juveniles of the two species differ in that the juvenile Black-bellied has paler and less well-marked upperparts than the juvenile Pin-tailed, and its belly is black.

Richard Vaughan
Bee Stone, Low Mills, York YO6 6XH

References

Cramp, S. (ed.) 1985. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic.* vol. 4. Oxford.
Johnsgard, P. A. 1991. *Bustards, Hemipodes, and Sandgrouse: birds of dry places.* Oxford.



Plate 28. Party of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata*: a female, four males and three juveniles, Spain, September 1993 (*Richard Vaughan*)



Plate 29. Family of Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis*: left to right, female, juvenile and male, Spain, September 1993 (*Richard Vaughan*)

NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson
Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

The National Trust and Nature Conservation

Ask most birders about the National Trust (NT) and they will no doubt have an image of stately homes and gardens—and without doubt that is very much the picture the Trust has presented of itself over the last 100 years since it was established in 1895. The National Trust Act of 1907, however, also charged the NT with the preservation of 'natural aspect features and animal and plant life'. Indeed, some of the earliest sites acquired by the Trust included Wicken Fen (1899), Hindhead Common (1906) and Blakeney Point (1912). Altogether, the Trust owns, or manages, some 235,000 ha of land, together with over 880 km of coastline, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Perhaps the Trust itself has not presented the appropriate image of its conservation work to the outside world. The recent publication of *The National Trust and Nature Conservation* will go some way to redress the balance. The document is stuffed full of interesting facts and figures. Over 70 of the Red Data birds (61%) are found on Trust land; 128 (40%) of the Red Data vascular plants; five (71%) of the Red Data butterflies; 466 designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest and 26 National Nature Reserves are owned or partially owned.

Surprisingly, the NT employs only nine full-time conservation staff at its central Estates Advisory Office, although these are backed up by some 80 or so countryside staff out 'on site'. There are few nature conservation organisations in the UK today that can claim to have a total UK overview of their work. Although the NT does not cover Scotland, it is almost unique in its England, Wales, and Northern Ireland role. We hear rumours that there are plans to regionalise the nature conservation work of the Trust. If this is so, it must be a retrograde step. If the National Trust is serious in wishing to be increasingly viewed as a nature conservation organisation (and it has justification and a track record for doing so), it must keep a strong central nature conservation function. The UK has seen far too much fragmentation of its nature conservation work in recent years, and a UK overview is paramount if we are to achieve our conservation priorities. Like all charities, the NT is short of funds, but, with its 2.2 million subscribing members, a high priority must be to have more conservationists on the ground and a strong central team to back them up and provide the expertise.

Copies of *The National Trust and Nature Conservation* are available from The National Trust, 33 Sheep Street, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 1QW.

Do West African Little Terns squeak?

The BOU Records Committee, currently assessing the claims of the Nearctic Least Tern *Sterna (albifrons) antillarum* in Britain, encourages observers visiting the West African range of Little Terns *S. albifrons* of the race *guineae* (or is it a race of *S. antillarum*?) to study the bird closely and, if possible, to obtain recordings of its vocalisations.

Pressure on birds of prey in the UK

Recent years have seen a growing pressure, from several quarters, for the legalisation of the control of certain bird-of-prey species. Foremost in the campaign have been the pigeon-racing and grouse-shooting fraternities. In 1995, the Department of the Environment hosted a meeting of interested parties and agreed to establish a working group to examine all the facts and identify any possible action. The group has been given one year to report back to the Minister with any recommendations. Two members of the working group have made their positions quite clear.

First, the RSPB, in the winter issue of its magazine *Birds*, has devoted considerable space to the raptor question and concludes that there is no evidence to justify any control action.

Secondly, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, in a Press release, has stated that the three statutory conservation agencies are opposed to the licensed killing of birds of prey. Several authorities have stressed the need to pay more attention to habitat management than to the control of numbers of any given species.

With the possible exception of the Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, bird-of-prey populations in the UK are stable or increasing, although few probably occupy the range that is available to them. The working group is charged with identifying the impact of raptors on game-birds and pigeons and considering mechanisms that could resolve the problems. Let us hope that birds of prey are not used as scapegoats.

The public enquiries unit for the working group may be contacted on 0171-276 0900.

. . . and in France

Some 21,000 French hunters have petitioned for a change in the protection laws in order to allow the control of harriers *Circus*, which they accuse of causing the decline of the Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* in France.

The LPO (Ligue Française pour la Protection des Oiseaux) is organising a counter petition based on loss of habitat and shortage of insects and weed-seeds. UK support for the LPO is organised by Ken Hall, The Anchorage, The Chalks, Chew Magna, Bristol BS18 8SN.

Wildfowl in Bulgaria

The midwinter (1994/95) waterfowl counts in Bulgaria resulted in a record total of 464,063 individuals of 56 species. Amongst these was the amazing total of 316,062 White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons*, and, by comparison, a meagre 40,557 Red-breasted Geese *Branta ruficollis*. The importance of geese amongst the wintering waterfowl of Bulgaria is demonstrated by the percentages: 77% of all the waterfowl are geese, whereas only 0.08% are sea-ducks. The involvement and commitment to the winter counts by Bulgarian ornithologists demonstrates the progress that the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds is making. Over a seven-day period, some 20 Bulgarian birdwatchers visited 29 of Bulgaria's 34 key wetland sites.

Since its formation in 1988, the BSPB has enjoyed steady growth from the original 50 members to its current membership of over 1,000, with 15 regional branches throughout the country. Growing numbers of visiting birders from Western Europe have discovered the ornithological interest of the country, and foreign nationals are encouraged to support the Society through membership. The BSPB has recently moved offices, the new address being 'Dianabad', bl.42, et.5, ap.34, Sofia 1172, Bulgaria; tel/fax: 00-3-592-620815.

New birdlife art gallery

Situated above the *in focus* shop at 8-10 Royal Opera Arcade, off Pall Mall, London SW1, the first exhibition in the new art gallery will feature the work of Martin Woodcock, which will be on show from 10th February to 22nd March. Clive Byers, Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris, Bruce Pearson and Michael Warren will exhibit later in 1996 and in 1997.

For details, contact Exhibition Organiser, Graeme Green, on 0171-839 1881.

Lost in the translation

Two promotional leaflets have come our way recently. The first we collected on a trip to the Netherlands and it promotes Zeewolde in Flevoland. 'Opposite Harderwijk is a swamp and lake area called Harderbroek. Here bred harriers, dodos, bitterns and grebes.' The second was sent to us by J. J. Walling and is for the Cotentin and Bessin Marshlands Regional Nature Park in Normandy. '. . . a huge lake forms in the marshes. The presence of this "whitened" stretch accounts for the wealth of hibernating birds.'

BTO's 10,000th

John Small from North Wales was birdwatching in the hide at Llyn Alaw Reservoir on Anglesey when he discovered that he had left his field-notebook at home. Fortunately, the hide contained a dispenser filled with BTO recruitment literature and John 'borrowed' one to record his observations. Later, back at home, having presumably transferred his observations to a more permanent recording system, he used the form to send off his first subscription to the BTO. As a result, he became the BTO's 10,000th member and was rewarded with a pair of *Leica* 8 × 32 BA Trinovid binoculars.

There has recently been some criticism that modern birdwatchers do not regularly take field notes. Please do not use this story as an excuse to leave your field-notebooks at home.

Every British birdwatcher should join the BTO: write to BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

Guessing numbers

We should like to ask all our readers a simple question: Which is the most numerous in Britain, the Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* or the Badger *Meles meles*? We rather suspect that most will vote for the fox. A recent census carried out by Bristol University, however, has estimated that there are only 240,000 Red Foxes compared with 250,000 Badgers. This started us thinking about perceptions regarding bird populations, a group that clearly has an exceptional database of information. Without looking them up, try estimating (or guessing) which of each of the following pairs has the largest British breeding population. Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* versus Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*; Hobby *Falco subbuteo* v. Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*; Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* v. Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*; and Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* v. European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*.

You may be interested to know that the Bristol University team came up with population estimates of 7,350 Otters *Lutra lutra* and 1,600 Red Squirrels *Sciurus vulgaris*.

The Northern Exhibition of Wildlife Art

This year's exhibition will be held at the Black Sheep Gallery, in the old stables complex of Hawarden Castle, Clwyd, during 5th-21st April. The exhibition is open to professional and amateur artists from the UK and Ireland, who are invited to submit two works, in any two-dimensional medium, in March 1996. Artists wishing for further details of the exhibition, or a schedule and registration form, should contact M. Tuffrey, 11 Dibbins Hey, Poulton Lancelyn, Bebington, Wirral L63 9JU. (*Contributed by Thelma K. Sykes*)

More wintering Blackcaps for Britain?

Professor Peter Berthold's continuing work on Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* in southern Germany suggests some exciting possibilities for the future. British Blackcaps winter in the Mediterranean basin and West Africa, whereas British-wintering Blackcaps originate in southern Germany and Austria. Those wintering in Britain and Ireland apparently return to their breeding grounds earlier than the more distant southerly wintering individuals, get first choice of nesting sites, and breed earlier and more successfully. If global warming continues, this could quickly result in a significant increase in the numbers wintering in Britain.

More UAE bird stamps

Four new designs comprise the second set of bird stamps in a series of 20 stamps being produced over a five-year period by the United Arab Emirates. This set of four can be obtained (for £2.50 incl. p&p) from Colin Richardson, PO Box 50394, Dubai.



Good news for Corn Crakes

For the second year running, 1995 saw an increase in numbers of Corn Crakes *Crex crex* in parts of Scotland. Specifically, numbers in Orkney increased from 20 singing males in 1994 to 37, while there were also slight increases in Lewis and other Western Isles.

For the past four years, the RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Crofters Union have jointly run the 'Corncrake Initiative', by which crofters and farmers are paid, through European funds, to cut hay and silage after 31st July, and encouraged to use Corn Crake-friendly mowing techniques to reduce the risks, particularly to young birds, from farm machinery. With some of the areas of increase within Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), the RSPB hopes that before long this mechanism will be enhanced to deliver effective Corn Crake management and thus obviate the need for the 'Corncrake Initiative' to continue.

N&c taken to task over rubber ducks

We recently (*Brit. Birds* 88: 391) published an item which suggested that the dumping of large numbers of tyres into the sea could be the solution to some erosion problems near Spurn Head, Humberside. A rapid response from Jeff Lunn of English Nature pointed out, quite rightly, that the erosion on this coastline provides vital sediments that maintain the mudflats of the Humber Estuary, one of the top five estuaries in the UK for birds. Indeed, the site holds wintering populations of nine species at internationally important levels and totals of over 140,000 waterfowl. Any alterations to the supply of sediment could have major implications for the site and its associated habitats and species. There is obviously a human as well as a wildlife element to the problem of erosion on this coast and it must be hoped that a sound and effective way can be developed to ensure the future interests of both.

It is perhaps a coincidence, but we recently received an invitation to attend the opening of the Spurn Heritage Coast Visitor Centre and offices at The Blue Bell, Kilnsea. With regret, we were not able to attend, but with the invitation we received a small package of sand from Spurn's eastern beach. We were requested to bring the sand with us and play our part in 'Spurn's moving story'. In fact, during the course of the day, each guest was asked to help Spurn Head to move by taking a bucketful of sand from the east shore across the few metres to the west shore: preferable, we assume, to throwing a tyre into the sea?

SOC Conference 1995

Just over 200 people gathered at the new venue of Kingussie for the Scottish Ornithologists' Club Annual Conference on the weekend of 3rd-5th November. After the traditional showing of members' slides on the Friday evening, the annual photographic competition was won by Edmund Fellowes.

President Ray Murray got Saturday morning off to a rousing start with Algirdas Knystautas from Lithuania on 'The birds of Russia', during which we travelled through vast areas of diverse habitats; Ron Summers showed how lemmings *Lemmus/Myopus/Dicrostonyx* rather than Polar Bears *Ursus maritimus* rule the Arctic; Kathleen Cartwright took us through the Russian Arctic by way of Franz Josef Land, East Taimyr and the Kolyma Delta; and Norman Elkins showed how various weather systems affect the arrival here of migrants and vagrants.

Sunday kicked off to an equally stimulating start, with Roy Dennis debating the possibilities of re-establishing certain mammal species to Britain, notably Grey Wolf *Canis lupus*, Brown Bear *Ursus arctos* and European Beaver *Castor fiber*; Richard Evans described his 18-year study of wintering sea-ducks in the Moray Firth; Rik Smith took us to the high tops in search of Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis*; Mark O'Brien covered lowland breeding waders; and Pete Moore rounded off an excellent weekend with his evocative shots of Highland habitats, birds and mammals.

BB was, of course, represented with the usual 'Mystery Photographs Competition', but in a political break from tradition, Edmund Fellowes, the winner (again), was presented by Malcolm Ogilvie with a bottle of sparkling Australian Chardonnay instead of French Champagne.

Scottish birds in 1993

Apart from Scotland's first Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* and Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*, and a host of other rarities, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club's *Scottish Bird Report 1993* (edited by Ray Murray, assisted by David Kelly) includes details of all the scarce species and summaries for the commoner ones. Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* bred, Wood Lark *Lullula arborea* sang and may have bred, eastern Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata maura/stejnegeri* sang but failed to find a mate, and Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* consolidated (27 sites, 22 broods, 67 young). There was 'a noticeable increase in the frequency of escaped Eastern Asian species appearing—with another Pallas's Rosefinch [*Carpodacus roseus*], two records of Long-tailed Rosefinch [*Uragus sibiricus*], a Verditer Flycatcher [*Eumyias thalassina*] and a Chinese Grosbeak [Yellow-billed Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria*]!'.

The *SBR 1993* is £4.50 (incl. p&p) to non-members; membership of the SOC is £15.00, and members get the *SBR* free. The address of the SOC is 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

News from Malta

Malta was once considered one of the bird-protection 'black spots' in the Mediterranean, but membership of BirdLife Malta (MOS) has now passed the 4,000 mark, which represents a higher proportion of the national population than for any other European bird-protection society. Latest news is given in the bimonthly newsletter *BirdTalk*. There have been numerous successful raids, prosecutions and convictions resulting from illegal hunting activities, including one instance where the Public Relations Officer of the Hunters and Trappers' Association was caught red-handed trapping finches in the close season. The year 1995 also saw some successes: Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* bred for the first time, two pairs of Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* bred successfully for the first time since 1977, and Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* reared two young, having last bred in Malta 20 years ago. Another new breeding species, Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, failed when its nest was destroyed by a predator.

If you would like to assist with what is clearly a winning team in Malta, contact BirdLife Malta (MOS), PO Box 498, Valletta CMR 01, Malta.

New photographic editor for OSME

Paul Doherty is well known for his bird photography (and for finding Britain's first Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera* near his local supermarket car park). More recently, he has produced the 'Bird Images' range of video guides. Now he has added the task of photographic editor for the Ornithological Society of the Middle East to his repertoire. Anyone with high-quality photographs of Middle Eastern birds can contact Paul at 28 Carousel Walk, Sherburn in Elmet, North Yorkshire LS25 6LP; telephone 01977-684666.

Let Basking Sharks bask

The Basking Shark *Cetorhinus maximus* is the second-biggest fish species in the World, weighing in at up to six tonnes. These placid marine leviathans are harmless, slow-moving surface-feeders, capable of sifting the plankton from 330,000 gallons (1.5 million litres) of water per hour, but are very vulnerable to injury from the propellers of motor boats.

If you see one of these giants on a pelagic trip or during a seawatch, please note as many details as possible for the Basking Shark Watch Project organised by the Marine Conservation Society, 9 Gloucester Road, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 5BU.

Wild Places '95

Repeating the 1994 competition, the YOC asked its members to adopt a local 'Wild Place' during the summer, and to visit it on several occasions, noting the habitats and species present. They were asked to write it up in a log book, using text, illustrations and photos, and then finally to suggest ways in which their particular 'Wild Place' could be improved for the wildlife, without changing the main land use. Winners were selected from three age groups. David Surtees (Savigny-sur-Orge, France) was winner of the 9-and-under category; Helen Wood (Melton Mowbray) 10-12 years; and Gemma Lee (Shepton Mallet) 13-and-over category. In addition to cash prizes, outdoor clothing and optics for the winners, Gemma has won a week's holiday at the Ru'a Fiola outdoor wildlife experience off Western Scotland.

The Fisher Collection

A detailed catalogue of the manuscripts of the late James Fisher — naturalist, conservationist, ornithologist, writer and broadcaster — is now housed in the General Library of the Natural History Museum. The collection includes correspondence, diaries and notebooks, research files, broadcast scripts, photographs and much else relating to all aspects of his life and work. The 86-page catalogue is available, price £9.00 + postage, from J. C. Thackray, Department of Library and Information Services, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

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Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*
John Wilson—*Northwest*



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan
This summary covers the period 18th December 1995 to 14th January 1996. These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* Still present at Nimmo's Pier, Galway City (Co. Galway), to at least 27th December.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* Near East Grinstead (West Sussex), 12th January.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* Glencaple (Dumfries & Galloway), 2nd-3rd January; Slimbridge (Gloucestershire), 4th to at least 14th January.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* Old Hall Marshes (Essex), 3rd to at least 14th January.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* Charleville Lagoons (Co. Cork), 31st December.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* Charleville Lagoons (Co. Cork), 31st December.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* Trebister (Shetland), 31st December.

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* Wheldrake Ings (North Yorkshire), 25th-26th December; Lamorna Cove (Cornwall), 11th January.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* Still present near Blennerville (Co. Kerry), to at least 26th December.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* Gloucester (Gloucestershire), 6th-7th January.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* Sennen Cove (Cornwall), 11th January.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* The Fleet (Dorset), 26th December; Ferry Bridge (Dorset), 31st December to at least 14th January.

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* Small influx into eastern England from mid December, with flocks of up to 50 in East Anglia.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Three, Dungeness (Kent), 23rd December to at least 14th January.

European Serin *Serinus serinus* Between East Runton and Cromer (Norfolk), 26th December to at least 14th January.

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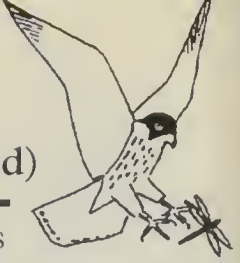
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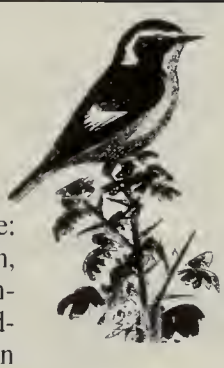
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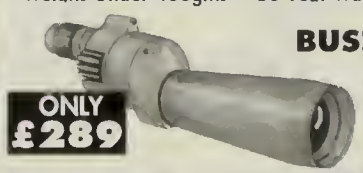
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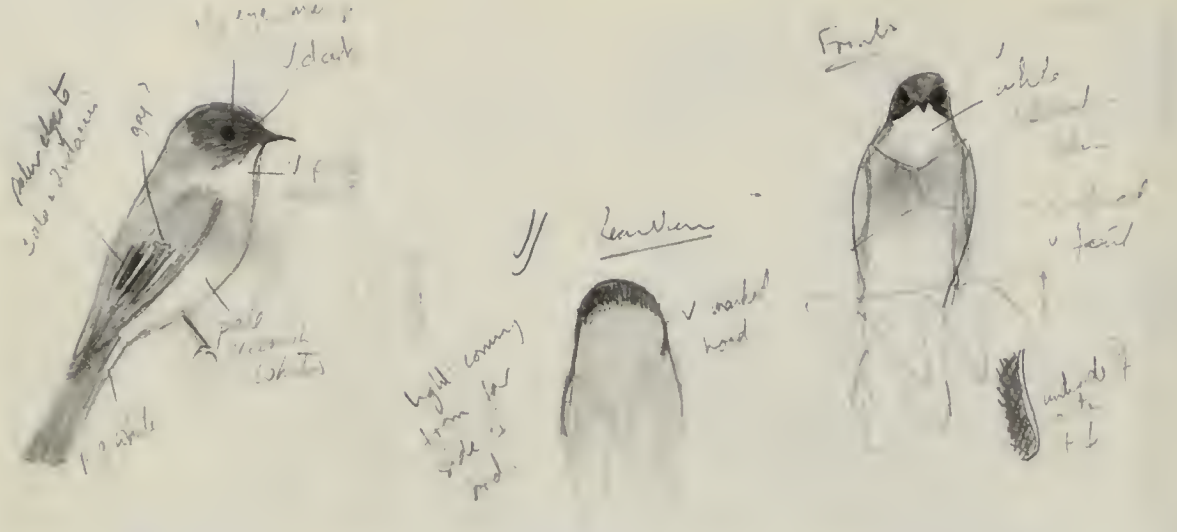
Eastern Phoebe in Devon: new to the Western Palearctic

Colin McShane

ABSTRACT An Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* was present on Lundy Island, Devon, on 24th and 25th April 1987. It has been accepted by both the British Birds Rarities Committee and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee as the first record of this Nearctic species for Britain & Ireland (and for the Western Palearctic).

On 25th April 1987, K. J. Mitchell, A. J. Wood and I arrived on Lundy and were told by the warden that several visitors had reported a supposed Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* the previous day. He had not seen it himself, but had some notes left by the finders that described a large, grey-brown and white warbler with a dark hood. The iris was not white.

A preliminary search of St John's Valley revealed nothing, so we proceeded to set up mist-nets in the area and in the neighbouring Millcombe valley. At 14.00 GMT, the nets were furled, and most of the group retired to rest after a tiring all-night journey. At 16.00, I entered St John's Valley and immediately saw a bird fitting the warden's description, but, even after just a few seconds, it was obviously not an Orphean Warbler; indeed, it was not a warbler at all.



Side view Rear view Front view

Fig. 1. Field sketches of Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*, Lundy, Devon, 25th April 1987 (*drawings by Colin McShane; annotated by K. J. Mitchell*), completed before bird was identified.

I watched it for 15-20 minutes in superb light, with 7×50 binoculars, as close as 5 m. It behaved in typical 'flycatcher' fashion, with an upright stance, 'sitting on its feet', and making fluttering sallies to catch insects on the wing and on the ground, each followed by a short flight to another exposed perch. There was an audible 'snap' of its bill each time that it caught a fly. It used rabbit-proof cages around several saplings as perches. It had a slow, deliberate tail-wagging, rather than tail-flicking. I made a description and then went back to find more people.

KJM and AJW came with telescopes and we watched the bird on and off for an hour in superb light, making notes and drawings. After we had reset the mist-nets, the bird perched on the poles, on the guys and even, once, on the top shelf string, but refused to get caught and, at 18.00, flew off into the next valley; it was never seen again.

It was certainly larger than any typical warbler, estimated at 6-7 inches (15-17.5 cm). The wingtips reached about one-quarter of the way down the tail, which was neither especially long nor short; in fact, the shape and proportions were reminiscent of a large Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*. The tail had a slight indentation at the tip. The bird was essentially grey-brown above and white below. The head was dark chocolate-brown, creating a hooded effect, with a clear-cut lower edge from the base of the bill under the eye to the side of the neck, leaving a white 'diamond' shape on the chin and throat as seen from in front. The hooded effect became more or less obvious according to the angle of light, sometimes merging into the mantle and sometimes looking quite clear-cut. The back was plain grey-brown. The angle of light also affected the contrast between the depth of colour of tail and wings compared with that of the back and rump: at most there was only a faint darkening of the wings and tail. The edges of the tertials, greater coverts and secondaries were faintly lighter brown. The outer tail feathers also seemed a little lighter than the rest, especially at the base. There was no wing bar at rest or in flight. The underparts were white, but the sides of the breast showed a greeny-grey suffusion, almost meeting in the middle; with the 'scope, this was seen to be composed of very faint blotchy streaks.

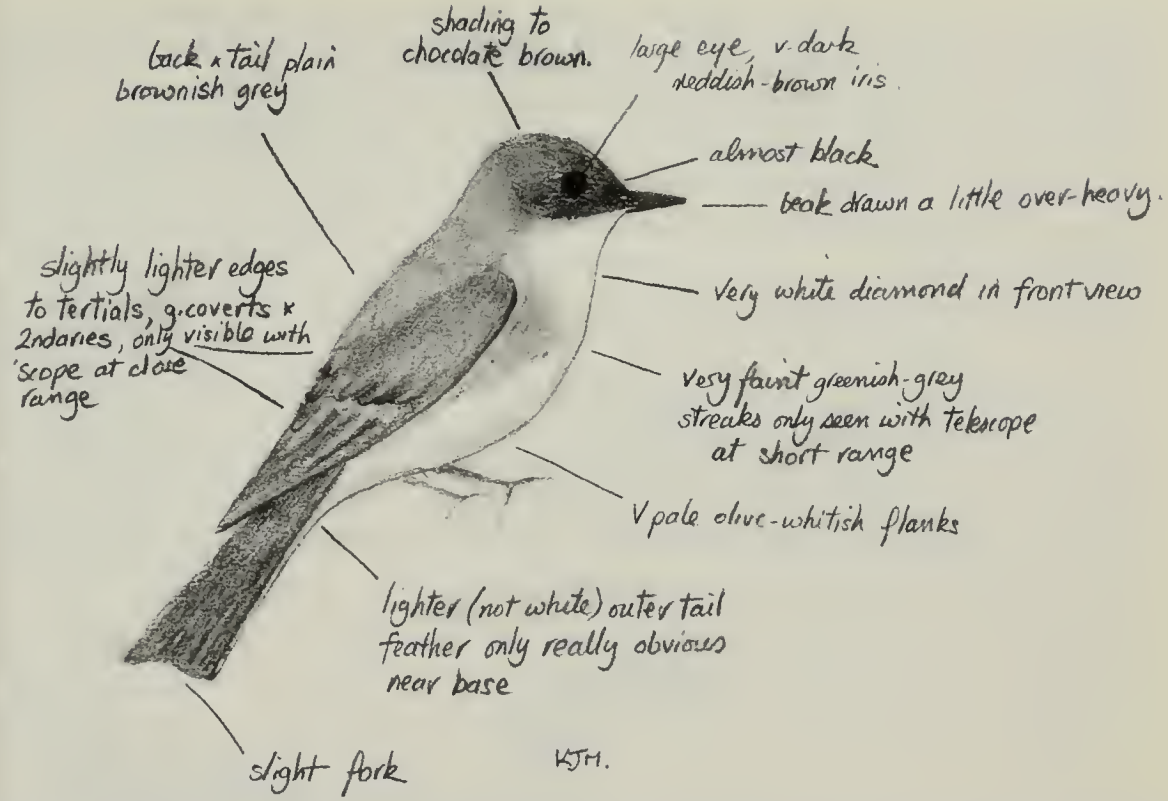


Fig. 2. Sketch based on field sketches (fig. 1) of Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*, **Lundy, Devon, 25th April 1987 (*K. J. Mitchell*), completed before bird was identified.**

The eyes were large and very dark, tinged red/brown at close range; there was no eye-ring. The black bill looked well proportioned for the size of the head, not over-large, and with no hook at the tip. The black legs were relatively short.

This description fitted none of the British and European flycatchers, and we had to wait until we had left Lundy to check field guides to other parts of the World. Various North American guides illustrated the Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* with the characters that we had noted. One reference also quoted a behavioural trait that we had noticed: it plunged into a small stream on a couple of occasions.

The notes made the previous day, 24th April, by J. Crook and another (unnamed) observer were detailed and included several sketches: they are exactly comparable with those that I made, even to the paler outer tail feathers ('fawn') and the changing appearance in the contrast between the hood and the mantle. Obviously, it was the Eastern Phoebe, understandably not properly identified at the time. The observers noted that the size and general pattern looked like those of Orphean Warbler (the dark eye suggesting a first-year individual), but the absence of white outer tail feathers and the persistent flycatching behaviour could not be reconciled with such an identification. JC said to his companion: 'Hey! This bird does not exist.' At first it was skulking and often lost to sight in the upper branches of trees, but then the size and behaviour—pouncing onto an insect on the ground—recalled a shrike *Lanius*. They noted 'flicking' of the tail rather than the slower 'wag' that I described. It was first seen at 06.30 GMT, found again at 09.00, and once more at 12.00, always in St John's Valley.

Colin McShane, 24 Horsebrook Lane, Brewood, Staffordshire ST19 9EF

EDITORIAL COMMENT Rob Hume, Chairman of the BBRC, has commented that 'The size, shape, tail-wagging and flycatching behaviour, together with the plumage details as described, left no doubt as to the identification.'

Dr David T. Parkin, Chairman of the BOURC, has commented as follows: 'As Rob Hume reports (above), the description of this bird is sufficient to establish the identification as Eastern Phoebe and to eliminate all possible confusion species.

'Eastern Phoebe is widespread across eastern North America from Nova Scotia south to Georgia; it occurs west into New Mexico [see fig. 3]. It has been recorded casually as far northwest as the Yukon, and northeast to Newfoundland. It straggles to the Bahamas and Bermuda, where it is recorded in about 50% of years, and it is seen on Sable Island in most springs. Thus, it is a short-distance migrant with a limited pattern of vagrancy. It is also an early migrant, which could be moving during April: much earlier than Eastern Wood-Pewee *Contopus virens* or the *Empidonax* flycatchers, for example.

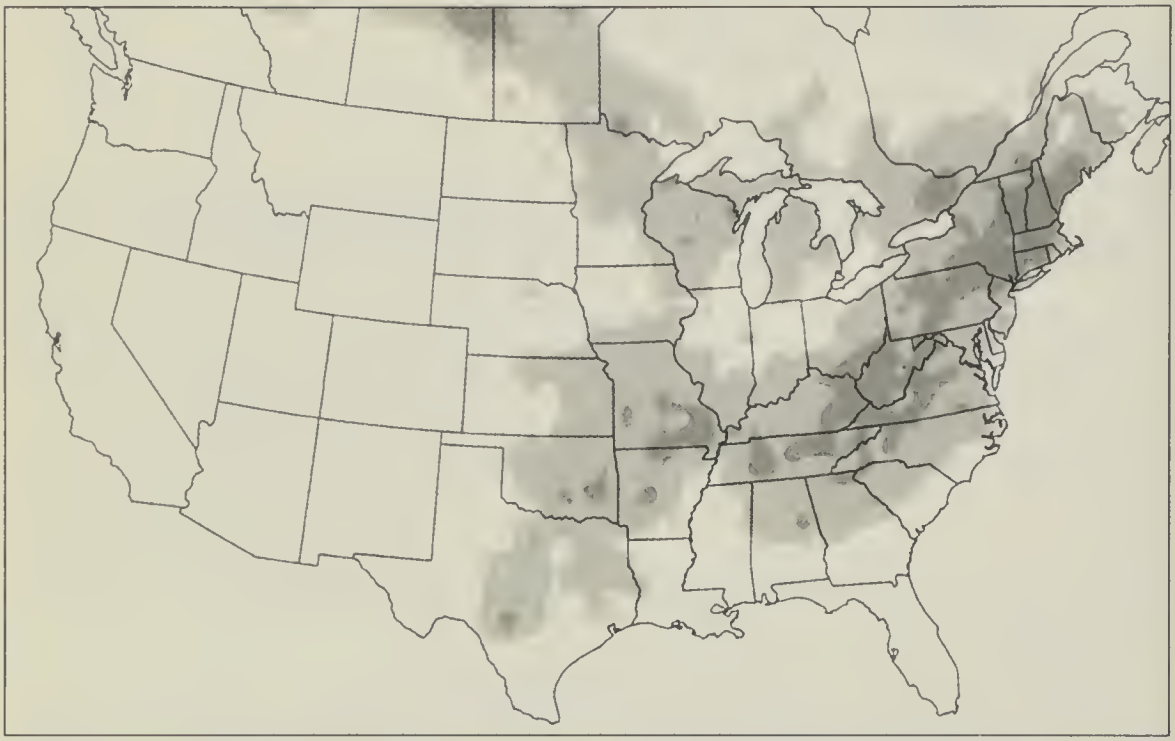


Fig. 3. Summer distribution of Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* (reproduced by permission of Academic Press from Price, Droege & Price, 1995, *Summer Atlas of North American Birds*)

'The record was accepted, and Eastern Phoebe was admitted to Category A of the British & Irish List (*Ibis* 135: 220).

'Problems arose over another claim of Eastern Phoebe from Slapton Ley, Devon [120 km southeast of Lundy]. This bird was seen on 22nd April 1987, only two days before the one on Lundy. The two records were circulated together. From minor differences in plumage, it was clear that two individuals were involved.

'The description of the Slapton Ley bird was, however, held to be incompatible with Eastern Phoebe by members of the BOURC and its North American consultant. This led to a delay as further opinions were sought, which supported the view that the claim was not conclusive.

'While it was thought by some members of the BOURC that the South Devon bird may have been an Eastern Phoebe, the ensuing debate led to a restatement of the standards acceptable in the description of a 'first for Britain'. In particular, it was agreed that:

1. The positive features of a claimed species should be sufficiently well documented for its unequivocal identification; it is not satisfactory to admit a new species merely by elimination of alternatives.

2. All, or almost all, important diagnostic characters should be included in the description.

3. Characters that are incorrect for a species should not have been noted.

'On all three criteria, the Slapton Ley record presented difficulties. The record was rejected by the BOURC as insufficient for a first for Britain, and the file was returned to the BBRC. On recirculation, that committee, too, agreed that it was not acceptable.

'This leads on to a more general point about field recording and documentation of rare birds. One member of the BOURC commented that, at the recent discovery of a major rarity, he was the only observer to make notes of the bird *at the time that it was being watched.* When difficult characters such as call and behaviour are critical to an identification, it is essential that these are documented at the time. The memory can play tricks, especially after recourse to identification guides. Field notebooks may be requested by either committee. It is often obvious that these were completed after the event—and sometimes after the observer had looked at his books. Finders of rare birds do themselves no favours by their failure to make adequate notes at the time that the bird is under observation. More than one record has been rejected in recent years because of the inadequacy (or even absence) of notes made at the time.'



REQUEST

Cinereous Bunting on Corfu

In June 1991, my wife and I discovered at least three singing male Cinereous Buntings *Emberiza cineracea* near the north coast of Corfu, with others scattered along the north of the island (*Brit. Birds* 86: 292).

The species has a very limited breeding range, on a few Greek islands in the eastern Aegean Sea and in Turkey. Corfu is well outside the previously known range. Further fieldwork is needed to discover whether Cinereous Bunting is breeding regularly on Corfu (and perhaps other Ionian islands).

Contrary to the field guides, the Corfu birds were not high on the hills amongst rocks, but were at sea level and singing from the tops of small pine trees.

I shall be pleased to forward details of the site where we found the main colony to any birder planning a visit to this area during May, June or July 1996 and, in return, would appreciate receipt of details of any sightings with as much information as possible on locations, habitat, behaviour, plumage details and breeding evidence.

DAVID JACKSON
The Cottage, 73 Main Street, Gunthorpe, Nottingham NG14 7EY



LOOKING BACK

One hundred and fifty years ago: 'Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*. A pair of these birds formerly bred in the cliffs on the sea-coast at Hunstanton, but we believe have ceased to do so; and . . . Another pair not long ago frequented the cathedral at Norwich apparently for the same purpose, but the female being shot while in the act of chasing a tame pigeon in the heart of the city, their intention was frustrated.' (*Zoologist* 4: 1301-1302, March 1846)

Also one hundred and fifty years ago: 'Bohemian Waxwing, *Bombycilla garrula*. Appears as a winter visiter, and is, generally speaking, rare, but has occasionally occurred in considerable numbers.' (*Zoologist* 4: 1309, March 1846)

Twenty-five years ago: '"Ecology" has become a fashionable word in commuter newspapers and discussion programmes, but one suspects that those who use it so readily are not always aware of its true meaning. Perhaps the next generation will be more enlightened, since many school biology classes are now being shown wider horizons.' (*Brit. Birds* 64: 134, March 1971)

Also twenty-five years ago: 'On 4th March [1971] Sotheby's Sale Room in London was the scene of an auction of natural history specimens which included the skins of a number of extinct birds. The keenest bidding was for a mounted Great Auk [*Pinguinus impennis*] in summer plumage, from the collection of Count Raben of Nysted, Denmark; this is specimen 25 in Paul Hahn's *Where is that Vanished Bird?* (Toronto, 1963) and is reputed to have been killed in Iceland in 1821. It was the first Greak Auk to appear on the open market since the 1939-45 war and, as specimens of this species had always commanded high prices, there was considerable interest to see how values had appreciated. In the event, this particular skin was knocked down for £9,000 to a group of Icelandic businessmen who bought it for presentation to Reykjavik Museum. Such an exceptional sum is probably the highest ever paid for any natural history specimen.' (*Brit. Birds* 64: 199)



PHOTOSPOT

38. Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*

The Great Knot is best known as a long-distance passage migrant in the Far East, mainly along the coasts of Siberia, Japan, China and Indonesia. In places, it can be numerous—for example, up to 300 have been counted at the Mai Po Nature Reserve in Hong Kong, and a photograph of one moulting into summer plumage there appeared in this journal (*Brit. Birds* 86: plate 57). It winters from Southeast Asia to Australia, where it is commonest on the northern coasts, though it also regularly reaches southern Australia, where there have been counts of over 4,000 from Queensland and up to 800 in South Australia (Lane, 1987, *Shorebirds in Australia*).

Given these distant passage and wintering areas and the species' limited breeding distribution in northeastern Siberia, it is not surprising that it is rare in Europe: only seven records to date, including the first and only British one in Shetland in September 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 469; 85: 426-428; *Ibis* 133: 438-439).

[*Brit. Birds* 89: 108-109, March 1996] © British Birds Ltd 1996



Plate 30. Adult male Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, **Russia, July 1992** (*Graham Bell*)

As a breeding bird, the Great Knot is one of the least-known of the World's waders. Indeed, it seems that only two nests have ever been found, so it was very exciting to come across a nesting pair on the east side of the Kolyma Delta on 7th July 1992. The habitat was a sheltered, grassy plateau with rocky outcrops and patches of snow, 350 m above sea level. The handsome male, in full summer plumage (plate 30), made himself conspicuous by performing 'butterfly' display flights in circles around our heads, perching prominently on rocks and clumps of grass, preening exaggeratedly, and running agitatedly both towards and away from us: presumably there were chicks hidden nearby, but we did not search for fear of treading on them, and after photography we withdrew. All the while, the male uttered a most un-*Calidris*-like mellow whistle, more reminiscent of the Pacific Golden Plovers *Pluvialis fulva* also nesting in the area. Meanwhile, his mate kept a low profile in the background, just standing or walking slowly to and fro, and remaining silent.

D. Graham Bell
Farne View, The Wynding, Bamburgh, Northumberland NE69 7DD

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OBITUARIES

G. K. Yeates MA FRPS (1910-1995)

The telephone rang. 'Have you got a dinner jacket?' It was our local RSPB rep. and Hon. Secretary of the Harrogate & District Naturalists' Society, who was organising our first joint film show in the town way back in 1968. Why the question? The famous G. K. Yeates was to introduce the films, and, if I also was to appear on stage, I had better be properly dressed. This was the first of my many such annual meetings with this almost legendary photographer, writer and lecturer. I felt that I knew him well, having read, and reread, his *Bird Haunts in Northern Britain* (1948), companion to his earlier *Bird Haunts in Southern Britain* (1947). These and three other titles, concentrating on visits he had made to Spain, France and Iceland, inspired a whole generation of would-be naturalists to do more than simply list what they saw. George, through his words and wonderful photographs, invited us to explore wilderness with him. The art of just sitting and waiting for things to happen, lost to many today, was central to the wildlife photographer's art in those days long gone. Having given up bird-photography in the mid 1960s, George then devoted most of his spare time to his other great love, fishing, and to growing alpines, and increasingly he withdrew from front-line ornithology.

Dr Kevin Carlson, a great friend over many years, recalls that George used a *Gandolfi* mahogany-and-brass camera with a *Cook Aviar* lens and wooden *Ashworth* tripod. He made all his own hides and in the early days carried the whole lot on a bicycle. Amazing!

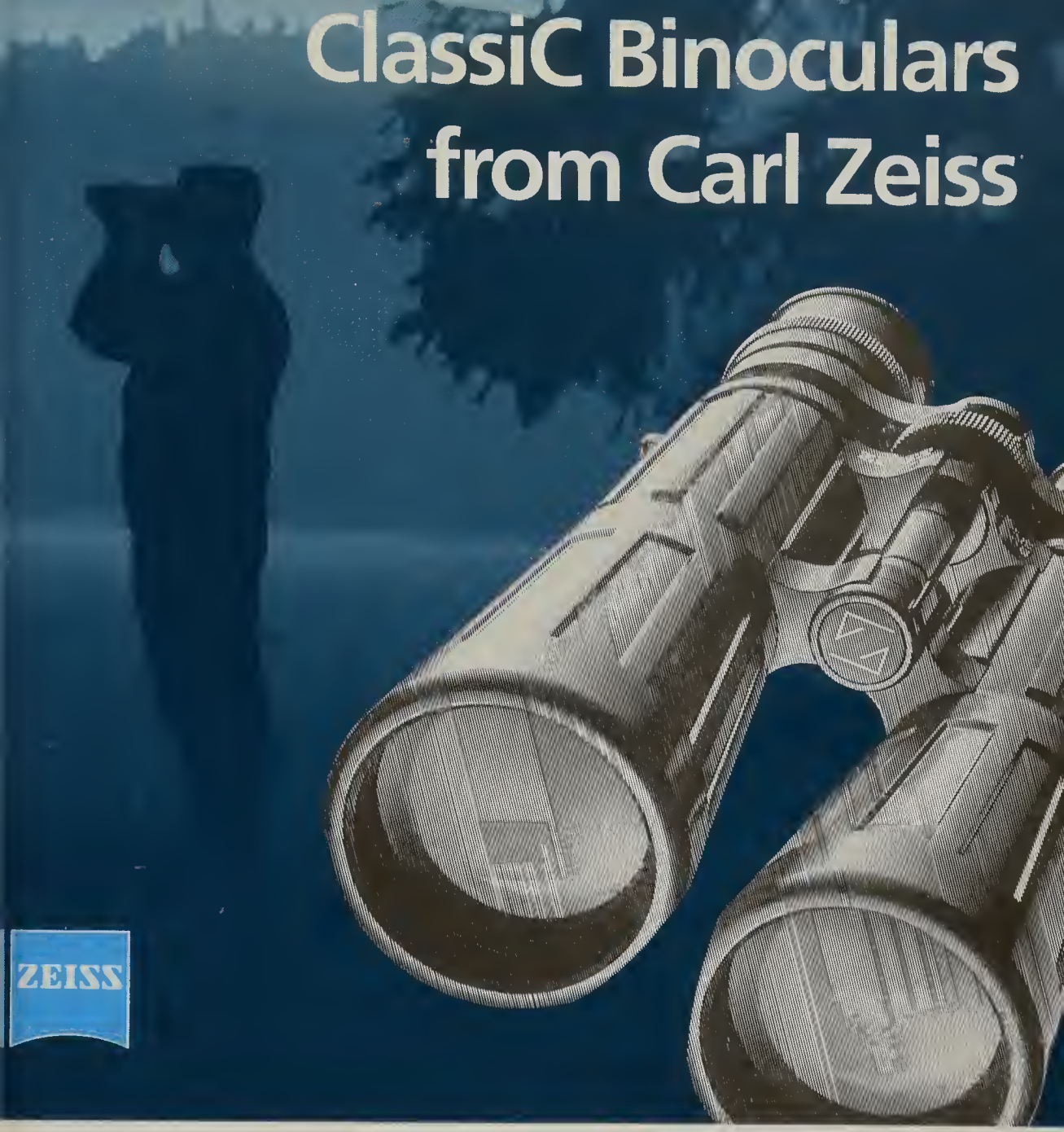
George's attitude to birds and to bird-photography was that of a hunter. He relished the thrill of the chase. He had, indeed, at one time been a wildfowler, and his greatest thrill was to obtain his trophy, which was, of course, a top-class photograph. On trips, his companions regarded him as wonderful company in the field, with a sense of humour described as 'raucous'. From my personal experiences at The Royal Hall, Harrogate, George came over as totally professional, with a deep and genuine concern for the protection of wildlife and wild places.

George was a prominent figure in The Royal Photographic Society, having been elected as a Member in 1937 and as a Fellow in 1938 and awarded its Exhibition Medal in 1947. He served as Hon. Secretary of the select Zoological Photographic Club for six years, from 1948 to 1953, and was then its President during 1954-55. Throughout this period, he had been adviser on photographic matters to the Editorial Board of *British Birds*, and this was recognised in 1952 when he was formally given the title of Photographic Editor, a new position, which he held for eight years, until December 1959, when his interest in photography had begun to wane, and he handed over to the equally well-known Eric Hosking. A tribute to his contributions to bird-photography and to *British Birds* was published, together with a selection of his photographs, in 1965 (*Brit. Birds* 58: 372-374, plates 52-59).

He had passed on his knowledge, experience and enthusiasm in his book *Bird*

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Photography (1946), but why did George give up bird-photography in the 1960s? Did he feel that the world of photography had moved on? Did he feel that he had really achieved all that he had set out to do? We shall never know the answers to these questions, but I know that George—if he is, in some mysterious way, reading this—can take enormous satisfaction from the fact that he helped to open the eyes of a generation of young naturalists before the days of high-fashion wildlife organisations, videos and television. He did something which is still the cornerstone of our conservation movements: he made people *care*.

Born in Leeds in 1910, G. K. Yeates outlived most of his contemporaries, and the effects of his enthusiasm live on.

TREVOR GUNTON

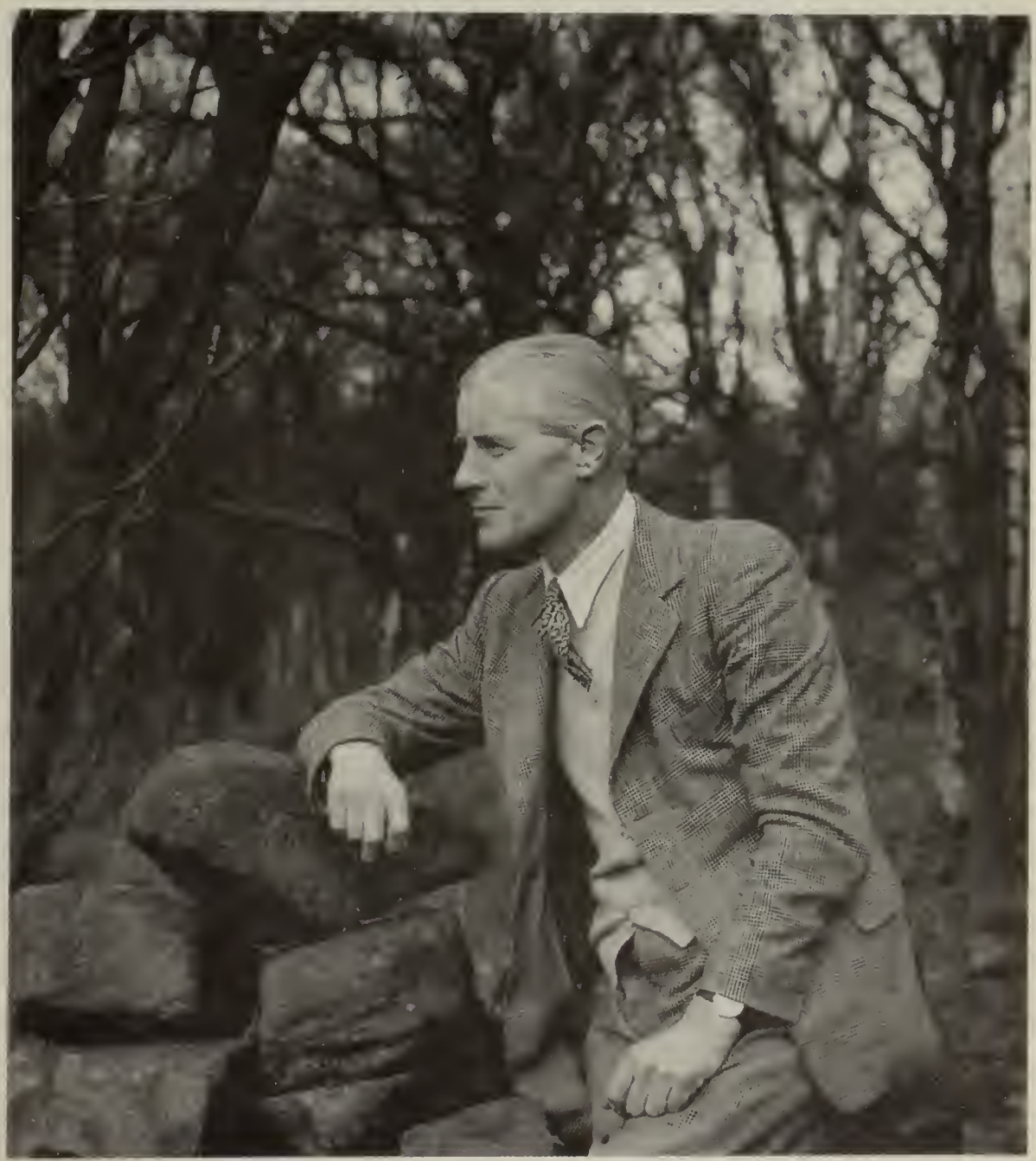


Plate 31. G. K. Yeates MA FRPS (1910-1995) (*RSPB*)

George Mackenzie Dunnet DSc CBE (1928-1995)

Long ago, when I was a raw young Cambridge medical student aged 19 at my first ornithological conference at Oxford, I found myself dining next to a tall, dark, courteous, knowledgeable, wise, unpretentious and entertaining Scot a couple of years older than myself. We had a lively discussion, but I never noticed his name, and realised it only recently when I found my old programme. When we dined together again a few days before his death, he was heavier, greyer, and now accompanied by his wife, Mom, but otherwise unchanged. I asked if he remembered our first meeting, but in his time he had met many gauche young students, and had forgotten this one. Yet, like most of his innumerable other friends, I shall always remember both my first and my last meetings with George Dunnet as two of the pleasantest occasions of my life.



Plate 32. Regius Professor George Mackenzie Dunnet DSc CBE (1928-1995) *(Andy Lucas)*

George was born in Caithness and grew up at Stuartfield in Buchan, where he attended Peterhead Academy. His first teacher (now in her eighties) reports that 'He was a quiet boy'. He first seems to have made his mark as a zoologist when he encountered Regius Professor Vero Wynne-Edwards and Robert Carrick at Aberdeen University. Robert took him to the lovely green islet of Eynhallow in Orkney to investigate Vero's hypothesis that Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* do not breed every year, and the Eynhallow Fulmars remained one of George's main interests for the rest of his life. He demonstrated the unprecedented length of this study by showing two photographs of himself and the same Fulmar taken some 30 years apart, in which only he had visibly aged. He used to take his students and friends on trips there several times a year, and knew all the Fulmars personally, though I was recently surprised to discover that, owing to the timing of the visits, he never ascertained whether, like him, they occasionally disappeared for sabbatical years.

After completing his thesis on Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* and visiting the Bureau of Animal Population at Oxford, George married Mom Thomson, who also came from Buchan via Aberdeen University, and who formed the other half of a formidable partnership. They joined Robert Carrick with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in Australia, where Mom bore the first two of their three children, and George studied fleas, the Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, the Brush-tailed Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula*, the Quokka *Setonyx brachyurus* (a rat-kangaroo), and the birds of remote Macquarie Island. Then, in 1958, he was recalled to Aberdeen to

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open the University's new Culterty Field Station on the River Ythan, which was soon attended by both students and senior research workers from all around the World, whom George would subsequently visit in their home countries.

He also made a distinguished contribution to the seminars and parties held by a local Vertebrate Ecologists' Group (or Glenlivet Club) organised by David Jenkins. In consequence, when it was decided at the annual Bird Obervatories' Conference in 1965 to set up a Seabird Group, we invited George to become its first Chairman. He went to great trouble over launching it, putting up with innumerable argumentative committee meetings during busy trips to England, where he restored law and order whenever necessary, until he resigned on making a sabbatical circumnavigation three years later. In consequence, he received little of the credit due, when it proved a great success and was used as the model for the establishment of many similar bodies in four other continents.

When, in 1970, the Seabird Group was awarded a large grant, we therefore asked if we could spend it in Aberdeen, where George was now promoting liaison between local scientists and the developing North Sea oil industry. The first emergency arose when a local BBC television journalist, Jack Regan, discovered at the last moment that it was proposed to bring the main gas pipelines ashore across the quiet waters of the Loch of Strathbeg to an £8 billion terminal in the green pastures of the Crimond of the psalm tune. An Environmental Liaison Group was hastily set up with George as Chairman, and the terminal was moved a vital 5 km south (which was in its own interests, as there was insufficient space for expansion at the first site).

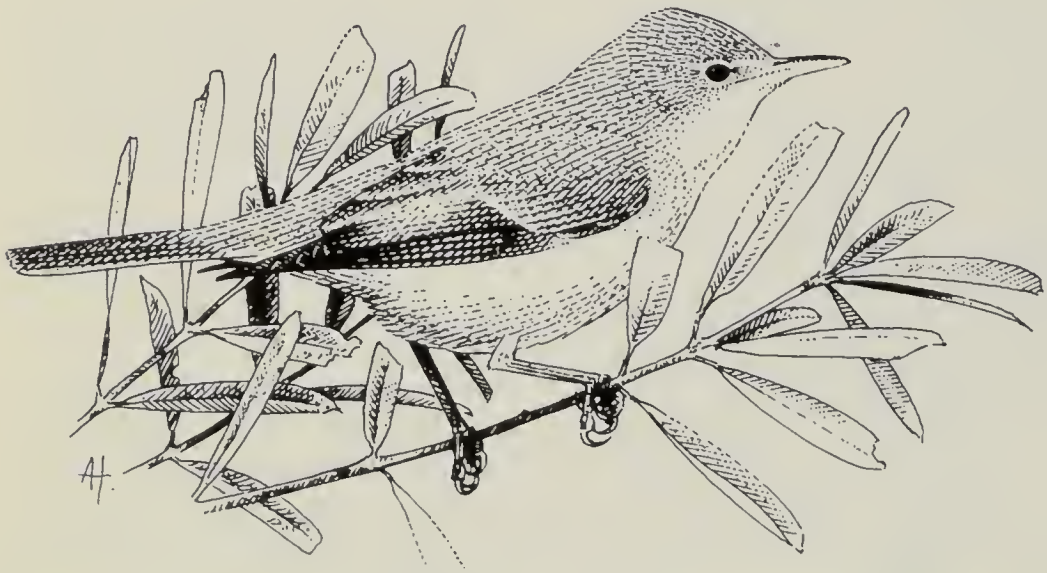
After this, George, who by now had succeeded Vero Wynne-Edwards as Regius Professor, and was advising on the design of the now-undetectable first mainland oil-pipeline landfall, was also asked to chair a continuing Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group (SOTEAG), which has helped to avoid trouble in another key area, and carried out much useful research. This was such a success that he was then asked to chair many other official bodies devoted to such things as research on seabirds, on Badgers *Meles meles* and tuberculosis, and on the management of Red Deer *Cervus elaphus* and Salmon *Salmo salar*, and to advise on similar problems throughout the World.

In the past, he would go for country walks with a group of friends on Sunday afternoons, but more recently this was replaced by croquet (which is not the innocent game that it appears). Such occasions were accompanied by a stream of entertaining discussion and would lead to a bibulous 'tea'-party. He could rise to any occasion, as for example when he was visiting a French radio station and a microphone was thrust into his hand without warning. He had always carried a vast workload, and ruthlessly suppressed his own feelings in contentious situations, and this continued after his retirement, though he did recently resign from Scottish Natural Heritage when it proved unwilling to accept scientific advice, which must have added greatly to the strain upon him. Eventually, he had a stroke while in Copenhagen to chair a panel of experts considering the possible environmental impact of a bridge between Denmark and Sweden.

He was an honest, charming and talented man who worked himself to death in the cause of conservation.

W. R. P. Bourne

Identification of *Hippolais* warblers



Hadoram Shirihai, David A. Christie and Alan Harris

ABSTRACT The criteria for the identification of all six *Hippolais* warblers have been constantly refined since the ground-breaking paper by D. I. M. Wallace (*Brit. Birds* 57: 282-301). This current paper not only reviews this accumulated knowledge, but also presents the results of new studies in Israel and elsewhere.

Since the first and only paper on the identification of all the warblers in the genus *Hippolais*, by Wallace (1964), much has been written on species within this difficult group, scattered among various journals (e.g. Shirihai 1987; Harrap 1988a,b, 1990; Ullman 1989; Fry 1990). In addition, the genus has been treated in a number of books (e.g. Williamson 1968; Hollom *et al.* 1988; Harris *et al.* 1989; Alström *et al.* 1991; Parmenter & Byers 1991; Cramp 1992; Jonsson 1992; Svensson 1992). These works have acted as standard references at different times during our studies of the genus over the last 15 years in Europe and the Middle East.

The present paper and plates have been prepared for publication in the forthcoming book *The Macmillan Birder's Guide to European and Middle Eastern Birds*, and special attention has been paid to the shapes of the six species. Just before painting the plates, for example, AH travelled to Israel purposely to make comparative observations simultaneously on Upcher's *H. languida*, Olive-tree *H. olivetorum* and Olivaceous Warblers *H. pallida*. Extensive details on biometrics, moult and geographical variation have been published in Williamson (1968), Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer (1991), Cramp (1992) and Svensson (1992), and readers are recommended to consult these works for such additional information. Although the following text attempts to cover all the field aspects of the genus,

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it was decided not to go into too much detailed description (this can be readily obtained from the plates and also from the above sources), but in a practical way to concentrate more on the principal difficulties encountered with this group and on those features which need to be seen and checked to enable safe identification to be made.

General distribution

Olive-tree and Upcher's Warblers are Levant specialities. The former is confined as a breeding species to open woodland with oaks *Quercus* or groves of olives *Olea* or almonds *Amygdalus* with much scrub, from the southern Balkans to south-western Turkey and south to northern Israel (late April to late August), wintering in East and Southern Africa. Upcher's breeds in mountain scrub and rocky areas with very sparse thorn trees on slopes or in wadis, from Transcaucasia and lower Turkey south to central Israel (migration much as for Olive-tree; on passage in desert areas, both favour acacias *Acacia*). Olivaceous Warbler is a summer visitor to warm-temperate and subtropical habitats containing tamarisks *Tamarix* or damp woodland, often near water, but also in arid areas or in parks and olive groves; it breeds in Spain and North Africa, the Balkans, Turkey, the Levant and Arabia east to western China, occurring on passage mainly in August-September and April-May; it is a rare vagrant elsewhere in Europe. Booted Warbler *H. caligata* is a summer visitor to shrubby and tall herbaceous thickets, from European Russia east to the Yenisei and western Mongolia and south to the Caspian Sea area (winters chiefly India); a rare vagrant, mostly in autumn, to most of Europe and the Near East (has summered in northern and eastern Europe). Icterine *H. icterina* and Melodious Warblers *H. polyglotta* are summer visitors (mainly March-October). Icterine frequents mature dense broadleaf areas and tall shrubs, also forest edges, in warmer boreal to temperate zones of much of Europe east to central Russia and north Iran, occurring on passage in April-May and August to early October; Melodious breeds in similar habitats, but with lower/denser shrubs, in warm-temperate parts of central and west Europe and northwest Africa, occurring on passage in March-April and August-September.

Identification

The following points identify the genus: relatively short undertail-coverts (but beware some *Acrocephalus* warblers with short-looking undertail-coverts); usually square-ended tail; prominent flattish head and relatively long, strong and broad-based bill (except on Booted and some Olivaceous); frequently appear to have rather straight profile from mantle to tail, and rather front-heavy appearance, often seeming 'clumsy and careless' in movements through cover. Note, however, that Olivaceous has a somewhat more rounded tail (shorter outermost feathers), and individuals of this species have also been reported as having relatively long undertail-coverts, rendering their generic affiliation less obvious. Adult Icterine and Melodious are generally greenish and yellow, the other species predominantly greyish or greyish-brown, all with a bland facial expression, and often with variable pale wing-panel and pale outer rectrices.

Within the genus *Hippolais*, the main problems (depending on region) involve

separating Olive-tree from Upcher's, Upcher's from Olivaceous, Booted from some Olivaceous, and Icterine from Melodious (grey individuals of the last two, mainly first-winters, can also be confused with Olivaceous). All species undergo a complete moult in their winter quarters; so, fresh-plumaged birds in autumn are juveniles or first-winters and heavily worn autumn individuals are adults, while spring birds are fresh or very slightly worn. Individual variation, abrasion and bleaching, and occurrence of intermediates, are further complications.

OLIVE-TREE WARBLER *Hippolais olivetorum*

The largest *Hippolais* warbler (about 15 cm); characterised by long, broad, powerful bill, long(est) and pointed wing and primary projection, and long blackish-grey tail with the most prominent white edges (performs frequent tail-waving). Upperparts predominantly grey, often contrasting rather markedly with tail and extensive whitish wing-panel (beware heavily worn summer/autumn adult with wing-panel reduced or absent).

Fresh plumage Differs from Upcher's in heavier bill with orangey-yellow lower mandible (pinkish-grey on Upcher's), and larger size with much fuller tail, latter with a blacker grey ground colour (dark but browner on Upcher's) and with larger areas of a more pure white at tip and sides which are noticeable in flight and during tail-waving (on Upcher's, white quite prominent, but less pure, narrower and less contrasting); darker grey above, often with impression of lead-grey or light bluish suffusion (Upcher's is duller/paler grey-brown). Longer primary projection more or less equal to exposed tertials and with seven or eight widely spaced primary tips (on Upcher's, projection about three-quarters tertial length, with six slightly more closely spaced tips); and more prominent whitish edging to remiges and tertials forming extensive secondary-panel (on Upcher's, fringes narrower, greyer, forming indistinct panel, and tertial edging more diffuse). Also has moderately angled forehead (but when excited appears rather steep and shorter than on Upcher's) and crown (peak slightly behind eye), which never look distinctly flattish.

Worn adult Close to Upcher's in having indistinct wing-panel, and browner tail with less obvious white on outer feathers, but size, shape and actions, general upperparts colour, and bill (size, shape and colour) should separate the two. Other differences include: bluish-grey tarsi (greyish-brown or dark pinkish-grey on Upcher's); fairly indistinct supercilium, largely restricted to in front of eye or even absent (on Upcher's, rather indistinct but usually visible, from bill base and extending slightly behind eye); greater contrast between upperparts and underparts, head always darker (indistinct demarcation between these areas on Upcher's, on which tail and wings typically darker than rest of upperparts).

Voice and behaviour Call is much louder, a deep 'chuk' often recalling Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (Upcher's is quite loud, but much less deep, approaching that of Olivaceous). Tail action more waving (like shrikes *Lanius*) and performed throughout year, whereas Upcher's cocks and fans tail up and down or from side to side (but tail movement most frequent and most strong on breeding grounds).

Other confusion species In the Levant, migrant Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* in first-winter or first-summer plumage is occasionally misidentified as Olive-tree. Note

former's shorter and grey-based bill, variable amount of barring or pale edges on scapulars, flanks and undertail-coverts, whitish wingbars, well-fringed tertials and wing-coverts, and different behaviour.



Plate 33. Left, Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum*, fresh-plumaged adult, northern Israel, May 1993 (*H. Shirihai*)



Plate 34. Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum*, worn adult, Eilat, Israel, August 1985 (*Per Alström*). Autumn adult is rather worn and lacks distinctive plumage features (such as pale wing-panel), but still predominantly dark grey with slight bluish tone; latter feature, and bill size and colour, general size and shape and behaviour and actions, are the best distinctions (if not too worn, amount of white on outer tail feathers still diagnostic).

UPCHER'S WARBLER *Hippolais languida*

Smaller (about 14 cm) than Olive-tree, being less stocky and 'pear-shaped', but slightly larger (and remarkably heavier) than Olivaceous: Upcher's is intermediate between the two, and the second-largest of the genus. Rather close to Olivaceous in general proportions and coloration, identification requiring caution. Tendency towards rounded head, and shows (mainly when excited) steeper, long forehead to crown, peaking just behind or well behind eye (together with thickset neck, tends to give heavy-headed appearance recalling a large *Sylvia* warbler); bill rather long and comparatively thicker than on Olivaceous, but owing to typically rounded large head does not look obviously long; tail long, thick and full. Otherwise, flight feathers, wing-coverts and tail dark brown, contrasting markedly with rest of upperparts, which are much paler and greyish or very pale greyish-brown; shows faint suggestion of wing-panel, shortish supercilium, and tail usually with conspicuous white tips and outer webs of outer feathers (unless very worn); legs and wings (and primary projection) long. Considerable individual variation exists, however: general proportions and size, and darkness or contrast of tail and wing, depend partly on angle of light and view and partly on background and habitat, as well as on degree of wear and abrasion (producing intermediates between Upcher's and Olivaceous), and much practice and experience are therefore essential (and some individuals are still not safely separable). On breeding grounds, adult repeatedly waves tail vertically and horizontally (both fanned and, less often, closed) in circular movement quite like that of Olive-tree (as latter, also moves rather slowly through foliage); Olivaceous flicks tail downwards, which Upcher's also does but predominantly during passage. When breeding, Upcher's habitually perches on rocks, unlike other *Hippolais*. Combination of many or most of the following features is essential for field separation of Upcher's from Olivaceous.

1. *Size, proportions and behaviour* Upcher's is large (size of Common Whitethroat *S. communis* or larger), with longer, broad tail, thick bill, rounded heavy head joined to plump body by thick short neck, and much less pot-bellied appearance, and moves rather slowly and quite often perches prominently; relatively smaller Olivaceous recalls a small *Acrocephalus* through often relatively angular head shape and rather flattish forehead to crown and narrower but broad-based bill, longer and slimmer neck and rather elongated body, but tail is comparatively shorter (and less full), and Olivaceous has more horizontal posture with low belly and more nervous, clumsy and faster movements. (Much overlap, however, although differences in proportions most obvious when birds in action or flying between bushes.) In addition, Upcher's has slightly longer primary projection (three-quarters tertial length) than Olivaceous (half to two-thirds) and usually shows longest and middle tertial tips closer together than inner two (spacing appears more equal on most Olivaceous), but this sometimes extremely difficult to see in the field and variation in both species, and differences in age and wear of feathers, render it of limited use. Tail-action differences are also important (see above).

2. *Tail and wing colour* Upcher's' darker tail and wings (including broad dark centres of coverts and tertials) are usually more striking (compared with Olivaceous), particularly on adults from late spring to autumn (when lack of paler fringes creates conspicuous, contrasting dark tail and wings), but beware that some



Plates 35 & 36. Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*, Israel, May 1993 (*H. Shirihai*)



Plate 37. Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*, Israel, May 1987 (*H. Shirihai*)



Plate 38. Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*, Israel, June 1986 (*H. Shirihai*). Note contrast of darker wings and tail, and nature of tertial spacing.

Olivaceous may appear slightly darker and contrasting and a few Upcher's look paler and less contrasting (especially in strong desert light); note that these feathers appear darkest when viewed from behind or slightly from side, and paler in profile view. Most Upcher's in spring and fresh young in autumn show fairly marked and quite sharply defined whitish fringes to wing-coverts and tertials, as well as to remiges, with variable whitish secondary-panel (most Olivaceous also show clear pale fringes and may have suggestion of similar panel, but these are often buffish and diffuse). Both species show whitish tips and margins to the tail, but on Upcher's these are on average broader, more distinct (contrasting with darker tail) and usually obvious in flight; this feature, however, is not constant, and is relatively useless for birds with heavily worn plumage.

3. *Other differences* Upcher's usually tends to have paler crown (often with hint of darker stripe at sides of forecrown) and ear-coverts almost as pale as whitish throat and to be predominantly whitish below and distinctly grey above, whereas most Olivaceous have slightly darker and warmer ear-coverts (and sometimes crown), often well demarcated from whitish throat, often have very faint yellowish-brown suffusion to breast sides and flanks, and may show more-obvious brownish or olive or sandy tinge above (although many are identical to Upcher's). On both species, supercilium in front of eye can be either thin or rather broad, or indistinct, but on most Upcher's tends to be slightly broader and whiter and equally strong to rear edge of eye (or to distance of less than eye diameter behind eye), while on Olivaceous it usually does not extend behind eye or on a few extends farther than eye diameter behind eye (but then only faint and indistinct). Upcher's' lower mandible tends to have some pinkish (chiefly pinkish-yellow on Olivaceous), with gape point always reaching fore edge of eye-ring (ends slightly before on most Olivaceous), and has three or four rictal bristles (three on Olivaceous). Leg colour varies: on Upcher's mainly dark brownish-flesh (mainly greyish-flesh on Olivaceous). Upcher's' 1st (shortest) primary reaches to about tips of primary coverts or is shorter (much longer on Olivaceous).



Plate 39. Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*, Turkey, June 1991 (*Robin Chittenden*)

4. *Voice* Upcher's' 'chuk' is obviously louder and deeper than the 'tchak', 'teak' or 'tek' of Olivaceous; other rattling 'churr' calls are louder from Upcher's. Latter's song is very variable and with enormous amount of mimicry, slower in tempo, with rich and open vowel sounds, 'unsteady', melodious, with warbling quality: very different from Olivaceous, which gives highly distinctive, rhythmic, rising and falling song (repetition over a long cycle of 10-12 notes, with eighth or ninth note higher-pitched), like Reed Warbler's *A. scirpaceus* but more monotonous, harsher, less gruff and more chattering. In Spain, song of Olivaceous is often compared to that of Sedge Warbler *A. schoenobaenus*.

OLIVACEOUS WARBLER *Hippolais pallida*

More variable than other 'grey-and-brown' *Hippolais*. Much variation is geographical and highly marked, with three races: *opaca* (northwest Africa and Iberia), nominate *pallida* (northeast Africa, possibly together with other North and Central African populations), and *elaeica* (southeast Europe and Middle East; includes synonymised form '*tamariceti*' of eastern part of range). General field characters and variations are as follows.

1. *Structure and jizz* Medium-sized (about 13 cm), with long, flattish but broad-based bill, longish tail somewhat more rounded (shorter outermost rectrices) than on congeners, and shortish primary projection (varies from half to two-thirds of tertial length); some, however, appear larger, relatively long-billed and long-tailed, with much broader bill base (race *opaca*), while others are rather smaller and daintier, with slightly shorter tail and bill and less broad bill base recalling *Acrocephalus* (race *elaeica*), and others even smaller, with much smaller bill and tail and very narrow bill base (easternmost *elaeica* and other small African races). Normally gives impression of long, low profile (flattish crown) with pot-belly, but quite delicate with elongated body.

2. *Call and behaviour* Has 'tak' calls recalling Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca*, and with each call pumps tail downwards; many other *Hippolais* have similar call and may occasionally flick tail downwards, but this action is never so conspicuous (and not combined with call). Otherwise, quite nervous and clumsy in movements.



Plate 40. Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* of race *elaeica*, Eilat, Israel, September 1986 (*H. Shirihai*)

3. *General coloration* Noticeably pale. Upperparts vary from fawn, through various shades of grey tinged with slightly colder olive (*opaca*) or greyish-brown (*elaeica*), to pallid plain grey or sandy (some North African individuals, a few Middle East populations), or predominantly greyish-brown (some easternmost *elaeica*); on some, upperparts colour can approach that of pale extremes of eastern Reed Warbler *A. s. fuscus* or even Marsh Warbler *A. palustris*. Underparts off-white, often with greyish or buffish wash on flanks and across breast. Wing usually appears slightly darker, with pale fringes forming variable (generally indis-



Plate 41. Left, Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* of race *elaeica*, Eilat, Israel, September 1986 (*H. Shirihai*)



Plate 42. Below, Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*, Eilat, Israel, March 1992 (*H. Shirihai*). This individual approaches Booted Warbler *H. caligata* in its small size, short primary projection and short bill; probably nominate race from northeast Africa, or from area of overlap and intergradation between Olivaceous of race *elaeica* and Booted of race *rama* in southwest Asia (latter population in part represents synonymised form '*tamaricetl*').

tinct) secondary-panel. Usually shows clear off-white outer-web fringe, tip and distal inner web of outer tail feathers, narrow but often quite sharply defined; this feature is quite variable in contrast and depth (and beware that, against light, outer tail of all *Hippolais* warblers looks pale). All races wear to a paler greyish-brown or greyish-olive (and are much more alike in colour) on breeding grounds.



Plate 43. Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* **of nominate race, Egypt, May 1951** (*A. Ashjian*). Note small size, short bill and short primary projection, but this race still has species' typical head pattern, call and tail-flicking.



Plate 44. Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* **of race** *opaca*, **Spain, May 1992** (*G. Gargallo*). Note typically much broader bill base and slightly colder olive tinge to greyish-brown upperparts of this race.

4. *Supercilium and face* Has typical bland facial expression of genus, with rather indistinct pale supercilium to in front of or above (or rarely to just behind) eye, although sometimes more distinct and occasionally extends behind eye (but largely faint), or often concolorous with lores (a few spring adults can show at least a hint of a faint darker border above supercilium); in the field, supercilium usually appears restricted to fore area. Otherwise, most have a pale area below the eye (actually surrounding eye), which may also contribute to the bland expression.

BOOTED WARBLER *Hippolais caligata*

The smallest of the genus (about 12 cm, little bigger than Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*), but does not appear correspondingly delicate. Characteristic in having comparatively heavy head with rather high crown and short, slender bill, and relatively shortish tail, but pot-belly and short wings (primary projection about half tertial length) make it look rather long-tailed. Strikingly pale brown above ('pale milky tea': valid for most fresh autumn immatures and most spring birds, but summer and autumn adult wears to very pale grey-whitish-sandy) and markedly pale off-white below. Unlike other *Hippolais*, has rather strong facial pattern, with prominent (though frequently diffuse) supercilium always extending well behind eye (to same distance as in front) and square-cut at rear, often with darker colour bordering upper edge, and also often offset by thin dark eye-stripe, which, combined with shortness of bill, can create *Phylloscopus*-like appearance. Wing feathers (including coverts and particularly tertials) typically darker-centred and with broad pale fringes, sometimes creating faint wing-panel. Tail fairly square, and outer feathers with variable whitish tip and edges to outer web and distal part of inner web, although this hard to see (or strongly reduced, even on fresh-plumaged individuals). At close range, often shows quite distinct pale eye-ring and, on some, more buffish suffusion on rump and uppertail-coverts. Very active, typically moving through undergrowth with slight upward flicking of tail and wings (but, unlike Olivaceous, no persistent tail-dipping); may also flycatch and, rarely, even hover (again recalling *Phylloscopus*). At distance, appears plain-headed. Much of Booted's variation is geographical, but some also occurs within a single population. For example, some individuals have both the dark eye-stripe and the lateral crown-stripe reduced or lacking, and/or the supercilium weaker, shorter behind the eye or only just visible behind the eye, closely approaching the bare-faced expression of other *Hippolais*, and also often have a stronger and slightly longer bill, paler greyish-brown upperparts and paler cream underparts (such birds are normally of race *rama*, particularly in spring), all quite different from normal nominate *caligata* described above; many are intermediate in characters.

Often confused with Paddyfield Warbler *A. agricola*, chiefly in spring or when individuals worn, but similarity should be dispelled by Paddyfield's general warm ground colour on upperparts and body sides and the different shape of its short wings but long and prominently graduated tail (as well as its undertail-coverts being of typical length for an *Acrocephalus*). Also confusable with *Phylloscopus* warblers, notably Chiffchaff *P. collybita* and Bonelli's *P. bonelli*: size and bulk, combined with longer and heavier bill and paler (non-black) legs, should separate



Plate 45. First-winter Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* of nominate race, Spurn, Humberside, September 1991 (*Steve Young*)



Plate 46. Left, first-winter Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* of nominate race, Bloemendaal, Netherlands, September 1988 (*Arnoud B. van den Berg*). Note small *Phylloscopus*-like appearance with typical long supercilium, dark lateral crown-stripe, short *Phylloscopus*-like bill, short primary projection and relatively long tail; also rather well-defined tertial fringes.



Plate 47. First-winter Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* of nominate race, Portland, Dorset, September 1987 (*Phil Atkinson*). Typical appearance in the field.



Plate 48. First-winter Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* of indeterminate race, Scilly, October 1981 (*Tim Loseby*). Typical posture and appearance in the field.

it from former, and lack of green or yellow from latter; Willow Warbler of race *yakutensis* approaches Booted in coloration, but former shows long primary projection, much longer and sharper supercilium, *Phylloscopus*-type bill, yellowish (not greyish-brown) legs and notched tail; Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* can be greyish, but always has rufous-buff suffusion to ear-coverts, flanks and undertail-coverts. Booted's call differs from that of any *Phylloscopus*.

Within the genus *Hippolais*, Booted is confusable only with Olivaceous (mainly *elaeica* or small North and Central African races), but is smaller, more delicate, with rather shorter and finer bill, and in general shape and behaviour it somewhat approaches *Phylloscopus*; bill is pale orangey-flesh or horn with dark culmen and tip (Olivaceous has all-pale lower mandible, rarely with indistinct blackish tip); also has more complex facial pattern, with at least prominent supercilium behind eye (where faint or absent on Olivaceous), and often a hint of an eye-stripe and quite obvious lateral crown-stripe, but very rarely Olivaceous may have slightly stronger supercilium behind eye and less rarely a slightly darker border above supercilium (conversely, some Booted have weaker facial pattern). Booted's upperparts are normally browner, and breast to flanks smudged with cream-buff (unlike most Olivaceous); it also has more prominent dark centres and pale fringes to wing-coverts and tertials, more flesh-brown or greyish-horn legs and more contrasting darker feet (but legs and feet can vary from bright pale pink to steely blue-grey, and many first-winters occurring in Britain have distinctly flesh-coloured legs), slightly shorter primary projection and more square-cut tail. More active when feeding, without downflicking of tail shown by Olivaceous (though can give slight upward flicks). Some larger Booted with slightly bigger bill or weak facial pattern and paler or greyer upperparts, and some smaller Olivaceous with smaller bill or faint supercilium and brownish tinge above, can be impossible to separate in the field (some even in the hand), but calls differ: Booted has single or repeated hard and rather harsh 'tick', 'skee' or 'chet' (never Olivaceous's repeated 'tak' with downward tail flicks).







Plates 49-51. Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum*, **Eilat, Israel, August 1993** (*H. Shirihai*). Note large size, with long wings (with large whitish panel when fresh) and long primary projection, long and full tail obviously darker than upperparts and with prominent white tips/edges to outer feathers, large bill typically bicoloured (lower mandible orangey). Dark grey above with hint of bluish; note patternless head. In the field, call very loud, actions very slow, and typically waves tail repeatedly.



Plates 52 & 53. Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*: **above, Israel, May 1993** (*H. Shirihai*); **below, Oman, May 1988** (*Hanne Eriksen*). Compared with Olivaceous *H. pallida*, note stronger bill, longer and broader tail, and conspicuously darker tail and wings; behaviour and tail action also differ.





Plates 54-56. Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* of race *elaeica*, Eilat, Israel, March 1990 (*above, René Pop; below, David M. Cottridge*). Notably pale, predominantly greyish, with typical bland *Acrocephalus*-like facial expression (supercilium almost confined to in front of and above eye); wings and tail only slightly darker than upperparts. Note also length and shape of bill, moderately long tail and shortish primary projection (last two features may appear, respectively, rather shorter and longer, depending on individual bird or population). In the field, looks rather elongated, and typically flicks tail downwards, generally in combination with 'tak' calls.









Fig. 2. **Booted** *Hippolais caligata*, **Olivaceous** *H. pallida*, **Melodious** *H. polyglotta* **and Icterine Warblers** *H. icterina* (*Alan Harris*)

Top two, Booted Warblers: left, first-winter of race *caligata*; right, race *rama* in worn plumage—long-tailed and thick-billed.

Centre two: first-winter Olivaceous Warblers: left, small individual resembling Booted Warbler; right, large individual.

Bottom left, first-winter Melodious Warbler.
Bottom right, first-winter Icterine Warbler.

FACING PAGE

Fig. 1. Olive-tree *Hippolais olivetorum*, **Upcher's** *H. languida* **and Olivaceous Warblers** *H. pallida* (*Alan Harris*)

Top two, Olive-tree Warblers: left, spring; right, worn plumage.

Centre two, Upcher's Warblers: left, spring; right, worn plumage.

Bottom four, Olivaceous Warblers: two left, fresh plumage, eastern race *elaeica* above, western race *opaca* below; two right, worn plumage, *elaeica* above, *opaca* below.

On worn Olivaceous Warbler of western race *opaca* (bottom right), note exceptionally broad-based bill even for a *Hippolais*.



Plates 57-59. Fresh-plumaged adults of Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum* (top), Upcher's Warbler *H. languida* (centre) and Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida* of race *elaeica* (bottom), Eilat, Israel, May 1993 (*H. Shirihai*)



Plate 60. Adult Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* **of nominate race, Spurn, Humberside, June 1992** (*P. Doherty*). Note small size (with notably finer bill) and buffish sandy-brown plumage, obvious extension of supercilium behind eye, dark lateral crown-stripe and whiter throat; also relatively short wings and long tail, and short primary projection.



Plate 61. Adult Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* **of race** *rama*, **Ashkhabad, Turkmenia, May 1992** (*Tim Loseby*). Appearance more like Olivaceous *H. pallida*, including general greyish suffusion (less brownish) and longer and stronger bill compared with nominate Booted.





Plates 62 & 63. Above, first-winter Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*, **Portland, Dorset, September 1994** (*Peter Coe*); **below, first-winter Icterine Warbler** *H. icterina*, **Scilly, September 1992** (*C. J. Timmins*). These two 'yellowish *Hippolais*' (though often greyish when immature and possibly confusable with Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida*) are best separated from each other by differences in primary projection and spacing (Icterine has longer projection and tips more widely spaced towards wing-point); Icterine's wings cover uppertail-coverts, which on Melodious are slightly exposed behind its shorter wings. Icterine also tends to have more solid pale wing-panel (absent or almost so on Melodious), duller and more uniform underparts (more obvious contrast between yellowish breast and whitish belly on Melodious), and purer lead-grey (less brownish-grey) legs.

MELODIOUS AND ICTERINE WARBLERS *Hippolais polyglotta* and *H. icterina*

Although both are typical *Hippolais* warblers (but with plumage olive-brown, green-grey and yellow to just whitish and buff), these two are often confused with some other warblers. Garden Warbler *S. borin* has short, comparatively deep, greyish bill (never long and broad-based or with orangey lower mandible), is plain greyish-brown or olive-brown above and dingy below, and has rather plain face with large eye. Willow Warbler is smaller, restless, flitting, with typical *Phylloscopus* appearance, very thin bill, stronger facial pattern (always very long supercilium) and different call. In autumn, both, though mainly Melodious, are not infrequently confused with Marsh or Reed Warblers: see characters identifying the genus (under Identification, above).

Icterine and Melodious in spring (fresh plumage) differ from all other *Hippolais* in being rather pale olive greenish-grey (Icterine) or greenish olive-brown (Melodious) above and rather uniform (variable) yellow below; summer and autumn adults wear to pale greyish-green or olive above (though Melodious is generally more brownish-tinged) and whitish-yellow below, with worn browner remiges, at a time when first-winters are distinctly paler grey-green (some very pale greyish-buff) above and off-white with variable yellowish wash below (some lack yellow, resembling Olivaceous: see below).

The following features separate Melodious from Icterine in any plumage.

1. *Wings* Melodious has short primary projection, roughly half length of exposed tertials, and wing-panel is usually absent or less solid (Icterine has long primary projection roughly equal to tertials and always has conspicuous wing-panel). Note that wing fringes are whitish (Icterine) or whitish-buff (Melodious) on autumn immatures, but mainly yellowish on spring birds in fresh plumage, while on worn autumn adults of both species wing-panel can appear whitish, or as series of white lines, or be non-existent (as on many Melodious). Both can, rarely, show primary projection to about two-thirds ter-



Plate 64. First-winter Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, Merseyside, September 1992 *(Steve Young)*



Plate 65. First-winter Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*, **Scilly, October 1991** (*Steve Young*)

tial length, so it is important to note primary spacing (on Melodious tends to be even, on Icterine more widely spaced towards wing-point) or, perhaps more so, wing-to-tail ratio (on Melodious, primary projection half as long as wingtip to tail tip and never covers tail-coverts; on Icterine, about same as wingtip to tail tip and covers tail-coverts).

2. *Subsidiary features* On Melodious, head is more rounded, with steeper forehead and with peak around or just before eye (rather domed crown); Icterine has flatter forehead, with crown peak well behind eye. Both have short, ill-defined supercilium mostly before eye, but this often extends slightly more behind eye (though more diffuse) on Icterine. Melodious usually has brownish-grey legs



Plate 66. Fresh-plumaged adult Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, **Farne Islands, Northumberland, spring 1992** (*P. Bush*)



Plate 67. Fresh-plumaged adult Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*, **Portugal, May 1989** (*Kevin Carlson*)

(bluish-grey or lead-grey on Icterine), but this is hard to determine and many individuals of both species can have greyish legs. Both species lack clean white on outer tail, but edges tend towards light brown on Melodious (slightly whiter on Icterine), this more obvious in flight. Most Melodious tend to show stronger yellow on throat and upper breast (on Icterine, often more uniform and duller yellow), this being more useful with first-winter individuals.

3. *Behaviour, character and voice* Melodious is slightly more rounded-looking (less elongated and slim), tends to skulk or remain long in same clump, although may sing from exposed perch, and feeds more slowly and methodically (Icterine often perches in full view, is more lively and impetuous, and often shoots off with dashing or flycatcher-like flight). Song of Melodious is a persistent, rapid *Sylvia*-like chatter with less mimicry, starting hesitantly and then going into softer, smoother but faster and more sustained musical rambling, lacking Icterine's 'rough bits'; Icterine's is a more varied and pleasing, high-pitched *Acrocephalus*-like refrain, perhaps recalling Marsh Warbler or Blyth's Reed Warbler *A. dumetorum*, but with discordant whistling, and is unstructured, rather hoarse and strained, but with long-drawn notes and including much mimicry (and Icterine usually sings from higher perch). Call of Melodious is variable, mainly a short sparrow-like chatter, less often a sharp 'tic'; Icterine (rarely calls in autumn) gives mainly a short, hard 'teck' or 'tec-tec-tec', in alarm tongue-clicks, and also has (mainly in spring) a musical 'tey-te-dwee'.

Occasional first-winter Olivaceous Warblers suffused more buff-and-olive resemble 'colourless' Icterine or Melodious (first-winter or heavily worn adults), but have primary projection between the two. Icterine and Melodious occasionally flick tail down, but never so conspicuously as does Olivaceous, and not in

combination with call. Olivaceous always has outer tail feathers edged off-white, this normally being indistinct or lacking on the other two (but largely reduced or absent on heavily worn individuals of all three). Olivaceous normally has a long, low forehead and crown (flattish head), unlike more rounded or domed crown of Icterine and Melodious, which also have more prominent orangey lower mandible and very pale ear-coverts (on extreme individuals almost concolorous with throat or crown, quite unlike warmer, well-defined ear-coverts of Olivaceous). Icterine has a much more obvious wing-panel (of little use with heavily worn birds). Folded wing of Melodious usually shows five primary tips; most Olivaceous show six, but quite often seven (as do most Icterine Warblers).

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NOTES

Shag colliding with fin of Basking Shark

On 6th May 1990, a warm and sunny day with flat-calm sea, at Great Saltee, Co. Wexford, Mark Shorten and I were watching a 10-m Basking Shark *Cetorhinus maximus* cruising languidly back and forth, its dorsal fin typically extending a metre or so above the surface. We were surprised when one of the many Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* in the area suddenly veered almost 90° from its flight course and headed straight for the protruding fin: approaching very low over the water, it hit the shark's fin squarely with lowered feet, the force of the impact apparently causing it to stall briefly, before it recovered and flew off to resume its original course. The collision with the fin seemed to us quite deliberate. If so, the Shag's behaviour is rather puzzling, since Basking Sharks are inoffensive filter feeders which present no threat to Shags or to any other seabirds.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT It seems likely that the Shag mistook the dorsal fin for a non-living potential perch, and received a nasty surprise. Shags and other seabirds have been noted feeding in association with Basking Sharks (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 59: 434), but we know of nothing comparable to this incident.

Grey Heron feeding after dark

At 20.25 GMT on 20th February 1990, about two hours after nightfall, while driving in Killarney National Park, Co. Kerry, I came across a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* standing upright in shallow water where the road had been flooded; it rose and flew off. At 21.04 hours, when I returned along the road, what was presumably the same heron was standing in the same spot, again flying off at my approach. At 21.29, at a flooded patch about 1 km away, I again flushed a Grey Heron, probably the same individual, which flew back towards the original point on the road; on approaching the latter spot, quietly, at 21.40 hours, I surprised a Grey Heron leaning forwards in typical stalking fashion; it lifted off into the darkness. The night was starry, with 3 oktas cloud cover and no moon. I searched the area for Common Frogs *Rana temporaria* or other potential food items, but could see none. I can only conclude, however, that, despite the darkness, the heron was feeding on some such animals. On 28th January 1992, I witnessed the same behaviour when, at 22.20 GMT, I flushed a Grey Heron from another flooded patch in the Park. *BWP* (vol. 1) states that Grey Herons usually feed by day, but makes no reference to night-time feeding. While I have heard reports of Grey Herons feeding in well-lit estuaries after dark, I can find no records of this behaviour or of their feeding in virtual complete darkness.

Terry Carruthers
Torc Lodge, Muckross, Killarney, Co. Kerry, Ireland

EDITORIAL COMMENT An earlier note described Grey Herons hunting at night by artificial light (*Brit. Birds* 83: 425), with an editorial comment drawing attention

to the statement in Hancock & Kushlan (1984, *The Herons Handbook*) that nocturnal feeding may, at least in Europe and Africa, be as important as or even more important than daytime feeding.

Wintering Merlins hunting over sea and hunting as a pair

From my experience of wintering Merlins *Falco columbarius* at Gibraltar Point NNR, Lincolnshire, I agree with Nigel Odin's view (*Brit. Birds* 85: 497) that Merlins coming in off the sea are not all new arrivals. My observations tend to suggest that these occurrences do coincide with over-sea movements of passerines. On several occasions, Merlins have been seen coming in during the first couple of hours of daylight during periods when movements of finches (Fringillidae), Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis* and pipits *Anthus* have been in evidence. It seems likely that 'local' Merlins regularly take advantage of tired migrants by tackling them over the sea. While I have watched Merlins arrive from the sea with prey, only once have I seen them hunting at sea: in January 1990, a female or immature Merlin was pursuing a Sky Lark some 800 m offshore when it was joined by a male Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, which endeavoured to catch the same prey; as the lark flew strongly landwards, it was seized by the Merlin, which held it for a short while until continual harassment from the harrier caused it to lose its grip, and the lark was able to land on the beach next to where I was sitting; the two raptors continued to fly inland until lost from view. I assumed that the Merlin was a local winterer undertaking a feeding sortie, while the harrier may have been a newly arrived migrant.

Further to this, during the winter 1991/92, three female or immature Merlins frequented the reserve. At least two of these could be seen together, usually over saltmarsh areas, hunting in unison. The pair would target an individual bird, often a Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus* or Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*, and then repeatedly stoop at it in turn until one made a catch; a high success rate was achieved. Once a kill had been made, however, there would be no further interaction between the two Merlins, and the unsuccessful one only rarely continued to hunt alone. On at least three occasions, during early mornings, what were presumably the same two Merlins were noted flying in off the sea almost simultaneously, one with a passerine in its talons; it appeared that they had been hunting together at sea, and again these observations coincided with coastal movements of passerines. The two Merlins were seemingly involved in a mutually beneficial hunting bond.

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Distinctive feeding behaviour of Semipalmated Sandpipers

While visiting Eastern Texas, USA, in April 1988, my wife and I studied the feeding behaviour of the coastal American waders. In particular, we noticed that the Semipalmated Sandpipers *Calidris pusilla* exhibited a very distinctive method of feeding along the edges of shallow pools and lagoons. Always preferring the shallower water, they would move forward, probe into the mud with their tubular bills, and then remain quite still for two to four seconds, before withdrawing their

bills and moving forward to try elsewhere. We never saw the bill withdrawn to swallow prey, and it was almost as if the waders were ingesting directly through the bill. We speculated that the Semipalmated Sandpipers either were awaiting a sense of movement or were drawing sediment and associated prey into the bill. Their motionless posture was distinctive even at a distance.

This all contrasted strongly with the feeding behaviour of accompanying Western Sandpipers *C. mauri* and Dunlins *C. alpina*, whose more-rapid movements heightened the contrast with the behaviour of the Semipalmateds. At no time did we see the Semipalmated Sandpipers take items off the surface of the water, although the Western Sandpipers often did so.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Claudia Wilds has commented as follows: 'After seeing the note on the feeding behaviour of Semipalmated Sandpiper, I spent several days looking at them carefully and recruited my most observant friends to do the same. None of us observed the reported behaviour at any time. At all times, all the feeding birds that we studied were engaged in some form of pecking. If an individual was standing in water (always very shallow) and feeding on something below the surface, it pecked several times in rapid succession—in the sewing-machine style we associate with dowitchers *Limnodromus* and Stilt Sandpipers *Micropalama himantopus*. If it was taking something from the surface of land or water, a single quick peck was usually sufficient. This pecking behaviour was observed among birds feeding at the edge of both fresh water and salt water. There were no Western Sandpipers around for comparison, but the feeding behaviour of the Dunlins, though out in deeper water, seemed very similar. I do not know what was going on in Texas. I suppose that it is possible that there was some sort of prey present that required the still, apparently sucking behaviour that E. M. Raynor describes. Semipalmateds tend to be more relaxed southbound than northbound, but I see that these were April observations. In any case, thousands of Semipalmateds in Virginia would go unidentified if one waited for them to engage in this slow-motion feeding pattern.'

Distinctive behaviour is often useful in the detection of an unusual bird amongst commoner ones, but is very seldom so diagnostic that it can be used to clinch an identification.

Herring Gulls feeding on flying ants

In July 1992, during thundery weather at Paignton, Devon, I observed a number of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* circling among flying ants at a height of about 30 m. On sighting an ant, a gull would stall and then move some 2 m diagonally upwards, seizing the prey with outstretched neck; occasionally, an ant was taken in direct flight. The feeding sequence lasted for 12 minutes.

Leslie Jackman
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EDITORIAL COMMENT While this behaviour is frequent among Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*, it seems to be unusual for Herring Gulls. David A. Christie, however, noted similar behaviour by three Herring Gulls in Southampton, Hampshire, in August 1994.

Unusual bathing behaviour of Common Tern

On 20th August 1992, at Seaforth Nature Reserve, Merseyside, I watched about 50 Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* vigorously bathing. One, an adult, was floating buoyantly on its back with its head and feet in the air; with a quick bout of wing-thrashing it soon righted itself, became airborne, and was lost to sight. It showed no sign of injury or impediment. After a further two minutes, what was possibly the same tern was again on its back, looking around with open bill; it righted itself with ease and was lost among the activity of the flock. On both occasions, the tern remained on its back for about 15 seconds.

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Hedge Accentor apparently afraid of its own reflection

At about 10.20 hours on 21st October 1991, at Eldwick, near Bingley, West Yorkshire, we noticed a Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis* standing in a shallow, water-filled concrete bath sunk into our garden lawn. After pecking two or three times at the surface of the water, it sprang to the edge of the bath, as though frightened. Twice, at short intervals, it went back into the pool, pecked, and retreated, before finally going through the motions of bathing in the short dewy grass of the lawn. The pool contained only water, which was no deeper than 4 cm. Was the Hedge Accentor afraid of a reflection which appeared to be trading peck for peck?

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Derek Goodwin has commented: 'I think that quite likely it was afraid of its own (perhaps distorted?) reflection. Reactions of different species of birds, different individuals of the same species, or the same individual under different circumstances may all differ. In the past, I showed many tame (to me) birds their mirror images and saw reactions ranging from wild panic to such *complete* indifference that I could hardly believe the bird saw the image.'

Female Blackbird persistently attacking its own reflection

At about 12.15 GMT on 20th December 1992, at West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, I saw and heard a female Blackbird *Turdus merula* pecking vigorously at its own reflection on the closed sunroof of my car, which was parked in a car-port. The Blackbird was so preoccupied that I was able to watch it from the side of the car, although it did move, still pecking, to the far side of the sunroof. This behaviour continued until 13.45 hours, when it flew to feed on a garden bush, where it repeatedly lunged at and chased two male Blackbirds which were trying to feed on berries; after a few minutes, the female again attacked the sunroof, continuing until 15.30 hours. Weather conditions at the time were dry, cold and dull. At 08.10 GMT the next day, what was presumably the same Blackbird was back pecking at the sunroof, until I drove the car away; on my return in the afternoon, it very soon resumed pecking and persisted until dusk, only to recommence soon after dawn the following morning. Attacks occurred daily, but by 26th December the Blackbird was striking at its own reflection less frequently. In order

to prevent it fouling the sunroof with its droppings, I started to cover the area, which at once stopped the attacks.

Attacks by various bird species, usually males, on their own reflections are well known. In this case, a female was involved in attacking its reflection on a horizontal, rather than vertical, surface and over a protracted period. Despite its preoccupation, it apparently found time to obtain sufficient food during the cold, frosty spell, for it appeared to be plump and well nourished.

A. P. Radford
Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

Great Tit eating earthworm

On 15th February 1990, in Killarney National Park, Co. Kerry, I watched a small flock of Great Tits *Parus major* feeding on a grassy patch. One male flew from a cotoneaster *Cotoneaster* directly to a spot on the lawn, picked up an earthworm about 4-5 cm long and returned to the bush; after wiping the worm on a branch in the manner of a thrush *Turdus*, it tore off and ate pieces, finishing the whole worm in less than a minute. Although the diet of the Great Tit is at least as well known as that of most other bird species, the food account in *BWP* (vol. 7) records 'rarely earthworms', with no specific references from Europe, and Gosler (1993, *The Great Tit*) does not mention earthworms in this species' diet. Our research on Great Tits in Killarney has revealed some evidence that the species may be protein-stressed in winter, and food such as earthworms may be particularly important at this time.

Terry Carruthers
Torc Lodge, Muckross, Killarney, Co. Kerry, Ireland

Magpies taking milk from doorsteps

At 12.10 GMT on 2nd July 1992, in a suburb of Southampton, Hampshire, a Magpie *Pica pica* was seen feeding from a bottle of silver-top milk left on the doorstep of a house. It flew off when disturbed, and subsequent investigation revealed that about 2.5 cm of milk had been taken. The taking of milk by Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* is well documented, but there are few references in the literature to Magpies feeding in this manner. Magpies are omnivorous and have increasingly invaded urban areas; they have now been seen taking milk on several further occasions, and this behaviour has been commented upon by the local residents.

A. M. Snook
16 Emmett Road, Rownhams, Southampton, Hampshire SO1 8JB

EDITORIAL COMMENT David A. Christie has commented: 'For a period of about two weeks in 1992, also in Southampton (but about 9-10 km from Rownhams), Magpies behaved in this same way, and also pecked through the shells of hen eggs left on a doorstep; this behaviour, which was irregular in occurrence, suddenly ceased and has not been witnessed since. Magpies are very common in the area.' In the summer of 1991, Magpies were noted pecking through milk-bottle caps for cream, a phenomenon which was subsequently reported from many parts of Britain (*Brit. Birds* 86: 315), but it seems unclear whether this behaviour has become established.

LETTERS

Richard's Pipit or Blyth's?

As a result of the recent spate of papers, notes and articles on identification of Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (e.g. Alström & Mild 1987; Bradshaw 1994; Marsh & Odin 1994), and the acceptance of a well-watched individual in Suffolk (*Brit. Birds* 88: 528-529), there seems to be a general feeling that an apparent Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae* which looks small and short-billed with pale lores and has a call resembling that of Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* or Tawny Pipit *A. campestris* is—especially in late autumn—likely to prove to be a Blyth's.

The editorial comment has even been made in print elsewhere that 'there are now well over 2,000 British birders with field experience of Blyth's Pipit who know that the species is really not *that* difficult to identify in the field' (*Birding World* 7: 475).

The following account should restore a sensible note of caution.

On the morning of 25th November 1994, Steve Stansfield burst in through our front door saying that he had found a large pipit in the fields nearby (on North Ronaldsay, Orkney) and that it had given some 'funny' calls.

Upon locating the bird in the persistent drizzle, our initial views were tantalising and poor, but in flight it looked extremely compact and short tailed, quite lacking the familiar 'fat wagtail' shape of Richard's Pipit. The lores were pale and unmarked and the bill also looked small and 'pointy', not long and thrush-like as with Richard's. We were joined by Pete Donnelly, Tim Outlaw and Dafydd Roberts, and staying with the bird became a bit easier. At all times, it crept in a typical 'small-pipit' manner through the tussocky grass which it favoured, completely lacking the confident, striding gait characteristic of Richard's. The end of each short flight was marked by a flop into the grass, with never so much as a hint of a hover. When first found, it was fairly vocal and displayed a broad repertoire of calls. Its flight calls included:

1. A soft call, reminiscent of Tawny Pipit, variously described as 'cheup', 'chupp', 'chrup' or 'chruip', usually given singly, though occasionally given preceding call 2.

2. A slightly hoarse and explosive 'sweeoo' or 'shpeeeooo', somewhat reminiscent of Yellow Wagtail.

3. A version of the classic Richard's Pipit call: 'srreep', which I wrote down as being 'mellower, less incisive and quieter'.

4. Whilst reacting to a Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* perched nearby, a very short buzzing 'brzzz' or 'bzzzz'.

5. Apparently also solicited by the nearby presence of the Kestrel, a slightly buzzy 'pseee' and 'pssss', recalling Tree Pipit *A. trivialis*.

We spent much of the early afternoon trying for the 'clincher': sight of Blyth's-type adult median coverts. Finally, we got a very brief view of the innermost median coverts on the right wing and I, at least, was certain that there was at least one such feather, a blunt-tipped inner covert which contrasted in shape with the 'saw-toothed' shape of the unmoulted juvenile feathers.

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In fading light, we left the bird and retired to read over the available literature. The circumstantial evidence was very strong indeed. None of us could reconcile our observations to our individual and extensive familiarity with migrant Richard's in Britain. The albeit brief views of the inner median coverts were sufficient for us to commit ourselves, and the decision was taken to release the news that there was a Blyth's Pipit on North Ronaldsay.

By early the next morning, the weather had improved considerably and the bird was soon found near to its original locality. In much better light, all of the previous day's features were confirmed and we were able to see the median coverts better. These indeed looked buff-tipped with broad blackish square-ended centres. The legs and feet were a stunning bright straw colour and the hind claw looked short, at about the same length as the hind toe.

We erected two single-panel mist-nets and caught the bird with unexpected ease. Our elation turned to crushing disappointment when, in the hand, it was immediately obvious that it was a Richard's.

The median coverts, on which our premature confidence had hinged, were indeed as seen in the field, but not quite the spade-end-shaped centres of Blyth's and mostly lacking the dark extension at the shaft. The hind claw, at 18.7 mm, was well outside the range for Blyth's, though this measurement was 58% of the total toe and claw. The tarsus length of 30.5 mm was towards the upper range for Richard's and firmly outside that given for Blyth's. The pattern of white on the 5th rectrix (unseen in the field) was classic Richard's (near to Type B of Svensson 1992).

The wing length of 93 mm was, however, near the bottom of the range for nominate Richard's (mid-range for Blyth's) and the tail length of 70 mm (checked to be fully grown) was extremely short for Richard's (but, again, mid-range for Blyth's). The bill measurements provided yet more evidence that this was a small Richard's, with depth (as measured at the proximal end of the nostrils) of 4.5 mm being right on the boundary between Richard's and Blyth's.

During processing, the bird began to show signs of distress, so was instantly released. This prevented us from taking any photographs and, indeed, from finishing a full suite of biometrics.

As a Richard's Pipit, this individual looked unbelievably small in the field, and this impression was confirmed to a great extent by the biometrics. It is tempting to suggest that this may have been an individual of a race other than *richardi*. The very varied range of calls given seems to be more in keeping with the south Asian races of Richard's (*BWP*, vol. 5, p. 303). Variations between nominate Richard's and some of these races are undoubtedly subtle, and even the ranges of biometrics overlap (Svensson 1992). The subspecies *dauricus* is said to average fractionally smaller, yet, having had our fingers burnt by this bird once already, we are not seeking further embarrassment by suggesting a firm racial provenance.

Each observer of the bird was duped, fairly and squarely, into the false belief that it was a Blyth's Pipit. The identification was premature and based on the erroneous assumption that, by and large, most Richard's (at least in the UK) look, call and behave similarly. Had we never seen the bird again after the second day, there is a very good chance that it would have been wrongly submitted to the BBRC as a Blyth's. It was an educational experience for those

directly involved, and this account is published with the intention of providing a warning to anyone else encountering a similar individual.

MARTIN GRAY
North Manse, North Ronaldsay, Orkney KW17 2BG

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The decline of the House Sparrow

The paper by Dr J. Denis Summers-Smith on the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (*Brit. Birds* 87: 593-602) cited a popular article by V. B. Dröscher on numbers of this species in Berlin which noted that the species had become a rarity in the affluent west because of lack of insects owing to application of pesticides, whereas in the east it was still common. This statement is completely incorrect. V. B. Dröscher is not known as an ornithologist in Berlin; and may have misinterpreted observations made during occasional visits to the city.

The first atlas work in Berlin (OAG Berlin (West) 1984; Degen & Otto 1988) showed that the species is equally widespread in both parts of the city, disregarding the forests and other parts devoid of houses. In Berlin (West), we repeated atlasing on a semiquantitative basis in parts of the city during 1989-91. Our estimates from that work show that the House Sparrow still ranks number one of all breeding species. After the founding of a new ornithological society of Berlin in 1990, we tried to get figures for the population levels of all breeding bird species in the city. Our estimate for the House Sparrow was 200,000 pairs, equipartitioned between the two parts of the city. Our concern now about the species is not pesticides but reconstruction of old houses, which has already resulted in reduced local densities.

KLAUS WITT
Hortensienstr. 25, D-12203 Berlin

EDITORIAL COMMENT Dr Denis Summers-Smith has commented: 'The letter from Klaus Witt suggests that I have unintentionally misled readers about the House Sparrow situation in Berlin. Dr Dröscher's comments seemed so apposite to what appears to be a general decline in western Europe that I could not resist quoting them; perhaps, in hindsight, I should have been more sceptical.

'The paper by Bruch *et al.* (including Klaus Witt) that was published in 1978, before the marked onset of the decline, noted the population of House Sparrows in Berlin (West) as 60,000-200,000 territories (pairs?). Thus, the 100,000 pairs noted now by Dr Witt falls within this range.

'I have also received a letter from Dr Alan Prowse, who has implied that I am underestimating the decline in Britain, his evidence from Surrey suggesting that it is nothing less than catastrophic.'

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OAG BERLIN (West). 1984. *Brutvögelatlas Berlin (West).* Berlin.



REVIEWS

The Raptors of Britain & Europe.

Filmed by Paul Doherty. Narrated by Bill Oddie.

Bird Images, Sherburn-in-Elmet, 1995. Running time 85.35 minutes. £16.95.

The 39 European falcons, accipiters, harriers, kites, buzzards, Osprey, eagles and vultures are shown brilliantly, just as they are seen in the field, using freeze-frame to show key identification points clearly, and with a first-rate commentary spoken by Bill Oddie. Help, advice and other contributions are acknowledged from raptor experts such as Dick Forsman, Killian Mullarney and Hadoram Shirihai.

For anyone who feels that he or she has inadequate opportunities to hone their raptor-identification techniques (and, surely, that must include almost everyone who lives in Britain?), this video-tape provides the perfect answer. It can be watched purely for enjoyment or as an ID masterclass. It is incomparably superior to even the best field guide or identification book and includes many critical field-marks and tips concerning posture, behaviour and other features contributing to jizz which I do not remember ever seeing in print.

The phrase 'It's a "must"!' has become a cliché, but this video really is an essential buy unless you have no interest at all in raptors.

J. T. R. Sharrock

Bird Life of Woodland and Forest.

By Robert J. Fuller. Illustrations by Chris Rose.

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995. 244 pages. ISBN 0-521-33118-8. £24.95.

Despite the great interest in woodlands, there have been few books on birds and woods in recent years. Yapp (1962, *Birds and Woods*) and Simms (1971, *Woodland Birds*) described the bird populations of different woodland types, whilst Avery & Leslie (1990, *Birds and Forestry*) dealt with the effects of forestry operations on bird populations.

Rob Fuller's approach differs from these. He puts Britain into a European context and shows how differently birds of these islands, at the western extremity of the continent, behave and react to forest conditions. His examples serve to remind us that, for many birds, woodland structure is often more important than tree-species composition. This is a readable book, with a wide range of references and useful appendices. The descriptions of forest types and the systems of management are good, with clear and helpful diagrams. In the introduction, he boldly (and rightly) states that there is more variation in the woodland cover of Britain than is found in many larger countries and recognises the opportunities offered by the new woods, rather than writing them off as do many commentators. I warmed to him immediately and have made a space on my bookshelf. In addition, the line-illustrations by Chris Rose are a delight.

John Niles

Larousse Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe.

By John Gooders, illustrated by Norman Arlott & Alan Harris.

Larousse, London, 1995. 319 pages; 1,300 colour illustrations; 400 maps. ISBN 0-7523-0014-8. £14.99.

The all-important field-guide section contains a total of 303 larger-than-average-field-guide pages. Full-page treatment is given to 23 species and half-page treatment to 477 species. Each species space contains a short, informative text with identification figuring prominently, an average of 2½ generally high-quality colour illustrations with important field-marks arrowed and captioned, a three-colour European distribution map and a year-long

abundance chart in confusing tones of blue. In addition, groups of similar species are illustrated and discussed on appropriately positioned pages and half-pages, including three particularly useful eight-page fold-out panoramas covering large raptors, small waders and warblers. Pages are colour-coded for quick reference. The book has over 20 short introductory chapters, many correctly devoted to aspects of bird identification, the usual index, a serviceable plastic cover and an attractive dust-jacket. A new field guide inevitably invites comparison with established ones. For me, Lars Jonsson's *Birds of Europe* still reigns supreme. Despite a few errors in the *Larousse Field Guide* (most embarrassingly one of the answers in the self-testing picture), it deserves to capture a sizeable slice of the remainder of the market.

PETER LANSDOWN

Bird-watching in London: a historical perspective.

By E. M. Nicholson, assisted by R. F. Sanderson; edited by R. Earp.

London Natural History Society, London, 1995. 203 pages. ISBN 0-901009-05-9. Paperback £8.95.

The title of this book misleads. Its main contents are actually the ornithological observations conducted in Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park during 1924-26 by a youthful Max Nicholson, presented here in essay form.

The historical perspective comes from comparisons with other avian records mainly from the same Royal Parks, drawn from the annual reports of the London Natural History Society. These include complete censuses of the parks' bird populations in 1948, 1966 and particularly 1975, when Max Nicholson and the other observers undertook a 50th anniversary repeat of his original 1925 counts. The book ends with a fully annotated list of the 177 species seen in the parks up to mid 1995.

As a testament to a remarkable human being's commitment to perceptive birdwatching (and his early ability to communicate it), the book succeeds. No-one interested in the birds of Inner London should be without it.

D. I. M. WALLACE

Summer Atlas of North American Birds.

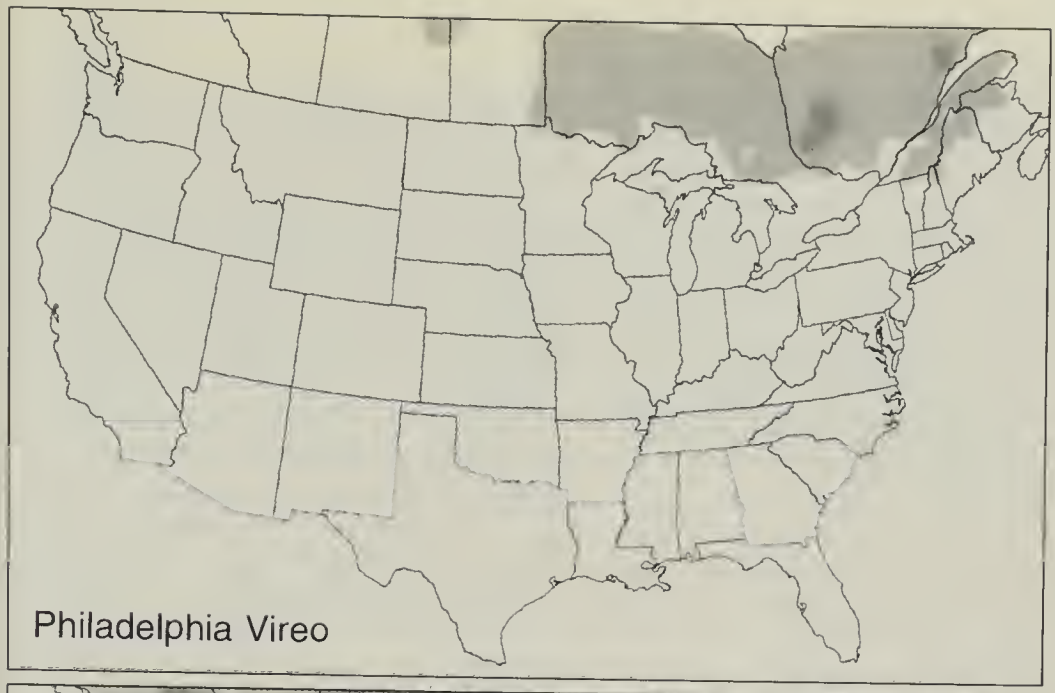
By Jeff Price, Sam Droege & Amy Price.

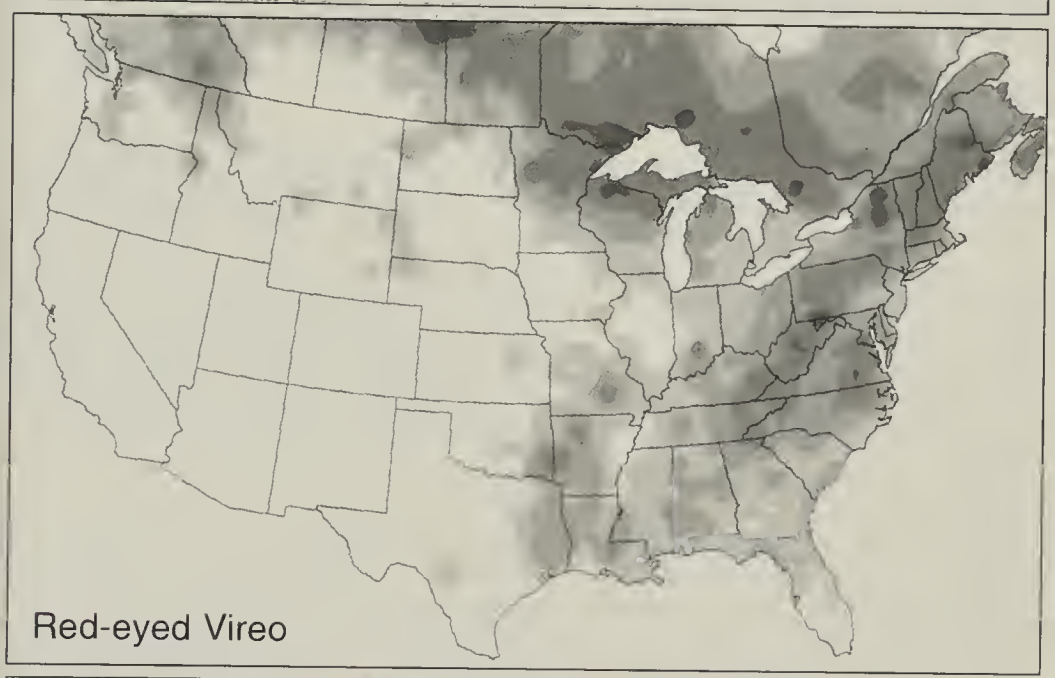
Academic Press, London & San Diego, 1995. 450 pages; 13 line-drawings. ISBN 0-12-564660-7. £30.00.

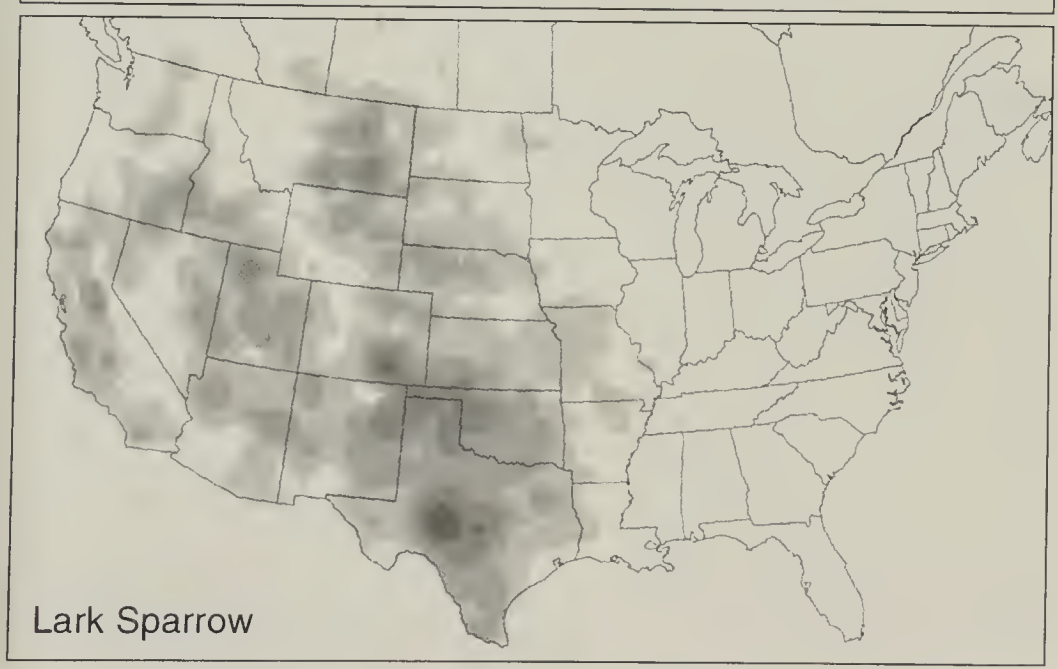
Turn to page 178 (or see the facing page here) and it is immediately clear why we have had 79 Red-eyed Vireos *Vireo olivaceus* in Britain & Ireland but only ever two Philadelphia Vireos *V. philadelphicus*. Page 179 also shows why we have never had (and probably never will have) the western Black-whiskered Vireo *V. altiloquus* turning up in Scilly or Co. Cork.

This book is filled with distribution maps covering the whole of the USA and part of southern Canada. The distribution of each species is mapped with four densities of brown, reflecting relative abundance during Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) roadside transects (based on counts during three-minute stops). Thus, this is an atlas showing distributions in summer, not a breeding-bird atlas, since no attempt is made during the BBS to obtain evidence of breeding.

The BBS was started in 1966, the brainchild of Chandler S. Robbins, to whom this book is dedicated. The data used, however, refer almost entirely to the seven years 1985-91. The period of the transects varies from area to area, aiming to be in 'early summer' (so routes may be surveyed in southern states as early as May and in northern areas as late as July). The density of shading on the maps has four levels (0.5-5; 5-20; 20-50; and >50 individuals per route per year). Thus, comparisons between areas are valid for any one species, but it is not possible to compare one species with another (owing to differences in detectability such as conspicuous versus inconspicuous perching habits, frequency of calling or singing, and so on). The methodology is explained fully in 17 introductory pages. The final chapter surveys subjects such as species richness, conservation issues and population trends, with some 60 pages devoted to a one-line habitat description (what a pity that these single lines do not


Philadelphia Vireo


Red-eyed Vireo


Lark Sparrow

appear under each appropriate map) and up to three lines detailing exact routes where each species is found commonly. The meat in the sandwich, however, is provided by 230 pages of distribution maps, two to a page, with no explanatory texts. These are marvellous for browsing among, even if you have never visited and have no immediate plans to visit North America. The third example (p. 149) shows Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*, relevant to the two recently accepted British records (*Brit. Birds* 88: 395-400).

Despite the modest description by Kenn Kaufman in his Foreword of the maps being 'painted with broad brush strokes', they represent the most precise and informative distribution maps available on a continent-wide scale. The only criticism that comes to mind is the strange omission of scientific names (there is ample space for them on the same line as the standard American name): not needed by most American birders, or indeed *British Birds* readers probably, but this book will be consulted internationally and should be in all of the World's major libraries. There is, however, a five-page appendix of American and scientific names (with the few instances of differing English names given in brackets).

If bird-distribution maps fascinate you, or you have any interest in North American birds, you will need to acquire this book and refer to it regularly. Chan Robbins and the hundreds of birders who have participated in his Breeding Birds Survey must now all be very pleased to see this synthesis of all their labours.

J. T. R. Sharrock

Birds of Britain & Europe.

By J. Nicolai, D. Singer & K. Wothe. Translated and adapted by Ian Dawson.

HarperCollins, London, 1994. 254 pages; 310 colour plates; several line-drawings; 310 distribution maps. ISBN 0-00-219995-5. Paperback £6.99.

A small, easily pocketed photographic field guide, originally published in Germany. Most species breeding in Europe are included (omissions include Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* and Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*), but few vagrants. The format has two, three or four photographs per page, facing the text. Usually, breeding adults are depicted, but for some species more than one plumage is illustrated. Sometimes (particularly the waders), only juvenile plumage is shown. Where there is more than one race in Europe it is the Continental, not the British race that is depicted: examples are Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, Pied *Motacilla alba* and Yellow Wagtails *M. flava* and Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* (coincidentally, the nominate race in each of these instances).

If you are looking for a collection of photographs of European birds, then you may find this book useful.

R. J. Chandler

A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors.

By Brian K. Wheeler & William S. Clark.

Academic Press, London, 1995. 194 pages; 377 colour plates. ISBN 0-12-745530-2. £20.00.

For each of the 43 species of birds of prey that occur as residents, migrants or vagrants in North America, there are a number of excellent colour photographs that show clearly all the features necessary for identification. The accompanying text is concise, complements the pictures well and is free from extraneous waffle. A final very interesting and useful section entitled 'Raptor Identification Problems' covers, with text and illustrations, 14 subjects such as 'Perched dark-morph buteos', 'Pale square primary panels on upperwings of flying buteos' and 'Sharp-shinned vs. Cooper's Hawks'.

It is only now, in the 1990s, that it has been possible to produce really useful identification books based on photographs. In the past, such guides lacked the range and quality of photographs to compete with the work of a good bird illustrator. So the question is: 'Photographs or paintings (assuming that both are good!), which are the more helpful for identification?' I suspect that, in the next few years, modern birdwatchers will start to prefer photographs. To put it another way: if cameras had been invented before the artist's brush, bird illustrations, once they bounced on the scene, might have had a tough time competing with images taken through the lens.

Richard Porter



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Gorman *The Birds of Hungary* (Helm) £19.99 ☐
Price, Droege & Price *Summer Atlas of North American Birds* (Academic Press) £30.00 ☐
Wheeler & Clark *A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors* (Academic Press) £20.00 ☐

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DELAYED, DUE MAY £125.00 ☐
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Zimmerman, Turner & Pearson *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania* (Helm) DUE JUNE £40.00 ☐

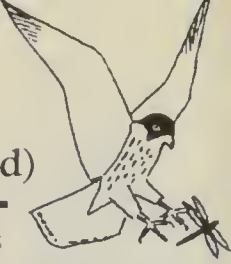
RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Alström, Colston & Lewington *A Field Guide to the Rare Birds of Britain and Europe* (HarperCollins). ... £14.99 ☐
Britain's Birds (BTO & JNCC)
..... 1991-92 £9.95 ☐ 1990-91+1991-92 £11.95 ☐ 1989-90+1990-91 £11.95 ☐ All three £13.95 ☐
British Birds *The 'British Birds' List of English Names of Western Palearctic Birds* £1.00 ☐
Byers, Olsson & Curson *Buntings and (North American) Sparrows* (Pica Press) £28.00 ☐
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MONTHLY MARATHON

The two entangled raptors (December's plate 221) were named by entrants as Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* (35%), Steppe Eagles *A. nipalensis* (28%), Spotted Eagles *A. clanga* (24%), Lesser Spotted Eagles *A. pomarina* (5%), Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* (3%), Montagu's Harriers *C. pygargus* (2%), Booted Eagles *Hieraaetus pennatus* (1%), Imperial Eagles *A. heliaca* (1%) and Black Kites *Milvus migrans* (1%). Although it was the least-favoured choice, the last-named species was the correct answer. The two Black Kites were photographed in Switzerland in April 1982 by Robert Maier.

At present, just two competitors have achieved a 100% record, with four-in-a-row sequences of correct identifications (Jon Holt, pipped at the post in the seventh Marathon, *Brit. Birds* 88: 560, and Anthony McGeehan, a previous winner, of the second Marathon, *Brit. Birds*. 81: 494-496); three others have three-in-a-row sequences (Dick Forsman, Hannu Jännes and Heikki Vasamies); two are on two-in-a-row sequences (Leif Gabrielsen and M. J. Tarrant); and a few others are on one correct identification; but most are now back at the tapes, on zero. The pressure is really on now for those in the leading bunch! They need luck as well as skill, and, if they stumble, the pack will be upon them and the Marathon will be wide open again.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (01767) 682969.



Plate 68. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 117: seventh stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. *Read the rules on page 24 of the January issue*, then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th April 1996.

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson
Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Of eagles and kites, Ospreys and pelicans

Well over 100 years ago, it was fashionable for Man to travel around the World releasing and introducing a whole range of wildlife that resulted in problems for the future. The nadir was reached perhaps in New Zealand, where so much of the native fauna has been eliminated or replaced by European introductions. It is perhaps ironic that New Zealand has recently repaid the favour with the flatworm *Artioposthia triangulata*, which has the potential seriously to affect the British fauna.

Over the years, the perceived wisdom has developed that introductions are wrong, but there could be a case for re-establishing species previously eliminated by Man's actions. This eventually led to the World Conservation Union (IUCN), in conjunction with a wide range of national and international organisations, producing a set of criteria for controlling the translocation of wildlife. These criteria have formed the basis for the recent re-establishment programmes involving White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Otter *Lutra lutra* in Britain. It must be questioned, however, whether the growing list of species that are being lined up for such projects constitutes a wise conservation measure or a sensible use of limited conservation funds. We hear of many species under consideration, including Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* into northern England, Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* into southwest England and a host of others, amongst which are Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* and Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*. Many readers will recall the ill-fated scheme concerning Great Bustard *Otis tarda* and, a few years ago, there was even a semi-serious suggestion that Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* could be re-established in southern England by placing eggs in the nests of Great Ringed Plovers *C. hiaticula*. High on the list now are European Beaver *Castor fiber* and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*. It has already been claimed that the former is merely a stalking horse for the Grey Wolf *Canis lupus*.

The Osprey has been remarkably successful in its natural recolonisation of Britain in the last few years. Breeding pairs now exceed 100, their productivity is good and they are slowly (very slowly) spreading from their original base in the Scottish Highlands. The current 're-establishment' plan is based upon Rutland Water, Leicestershire, and has the full support of Anglian Water (the owners) and the Leicestershire and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation (the managers). Teaming up with Roy Dennis from the Highlands, the intention is to take 'runt' Osprey chicks from nests in Scotland and, by using tried-and-tested techniques from North America, establish the species at Rutland Water.

[*Brit. Birds* 89: 152-156, March 1996] © British Birds Ltd 1996

Such action will require the approval of the statutory conservation agencies. Scottish Natural Heritage would need to license the taking of the chicks, and English Nature would need to approve their release into a Site of Special Scientific Interest. One hopes that full consideration would also be given to the fact that Rutland Water is a Special Protection Area under the EU Birds Directive and is also designated a Ramsar site by the British Government.

The Osprey is spreading and increasing. It could take over 100 years before it reaches Rutland, or it might take considerably less in view of the facts that immatures summer there and suitable nest sites have been constructed. Think how splendid natural colonisation would be. Artificial introduction would mean that we would never know what would have happened if we had not interfered. Surely this cannot be the solution to the country's bird-conservation problems? Should not those involved think again? There must be some doubt as to whether the Osprey ever bred in Leicestershire. If it did, it was a very very long time ago. Perhaps it is a stalking horse for the White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*? There might be a stronger case for reinforcing the Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca* which have a toe-hold in Shetland or the Golden Eagles which cling on in the Lake District, but we suspect that the 'N & c' team would not be supportive of those, either.

News from Kent

The Kent Ornithological Society is confidently forecasting that the county list will reach 400 species by the year 2000—the only caveat being that the BOURC does not remove any more! Kent has seen some significant changes in its bird populations since the publication of the acclaimed *Birds of Kent* in 1981 and it is good news that the KOS is planning a new edition in 1998. Also in the pipeline is a third edition of *Where to Watch Birds in Kent, Surrey and Sussex*.

Equally good news is the joint approach in Kent by the KOS, the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation and the RSPB SE Region towards ornithological matters in the county. The wealth of data stored by county societies can providc an extremely useful base for regional conservation action and it is good to hear of such co-operation. It enables local birders to understand just what are the conservation priorities and just where the future surveys and record-collecting should be directed. Two species that immediately spring to mind in Kent are Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* and Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*.

3rd Pyrenean Conference

Over 120 delegates from both sides of the Pyrénées attended the 3rd Conference on Pyrenean Ornithology, held in Andorra on 7th-8th October 1995. Most of those attending were impressive linguists, coping equally well with French, Spanish and Catalan.

Such typical Pyrenean birds as Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus*, Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*, Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* and Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* were the subjects of the majority of studies, which often made depressing hearing.

Increasing disturbance, especially from cross-country skiing, 'adventure' tourism and forestry tracks through previously remote areas, has led to the fragmentation of suitable breeding and wintering areas. On a more encouraging note, Lammergeier numbers in Catalunya have increased from five pairs in 1980 to 40 adults and 20-25 immatures in 1995; 12 new pairs were formed between 1980 and 1995, of which five are breeding regularly. Some 15 feeding stations, which have been established along the French side, are helping this species as well as Griffon Vultures, which are continuing an impressive expansion.

All papers (with English summaries) will be published in the first 1996 issue of *Alauda* and can be ordered from ADN, Ap. de Correus Espanyols num 96, Andorra la Vella, Principat d'Andorra. (*Contributed by Jacqueline Crozier*)

'Ydhyn yn Kernow'

The latest annual report from the Cornwall Bird-Watching and Preservation Society, *Birds in Cornwall 1994*, edited by Stanley Christophers, boasts a massive but easy-to-read 130-page systematic list, enhanced not only by decorative drawings, but also by instructive documentary sketches of the Hayle Estuary Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* by Mike Thomas and the Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (also at Hayle) by Phil Rutter.

Analysis of 1954-93 records of Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* and Iceland Gull *L. glaucoides* by John Ryan showed that influxes of the two species correlate (a good year for one is usually a good year for the other, e.g. 1972, 1974, 1978, 1979, 1983, 1984, 1988 and 1991), suggesting that the origin of the Cornish individuals is the same for each species.

A June 1993 census of Common Stonechats *Saxicola torquata*, described by Derek Lord, produced estimates of 660 pairs in Cornwall, including 298 on the coast and 23 pairs in the Isles of Scilly.

For details of membership of the CBWPS or to buy the *Report* (which costs £5.50), write to Richard Hooton, 17 Hawkens Way, St Columb Major, Cornwall TR9 6SS.

. . . and Scilly

The CBWPS's *Isles of Scilly Bird Report 1994*, edited by Peter Robinson, is a hefty 85-pager and includes not only the systematic list, compiled by Will Wagstaff, but also accounts of the year's three rarity highlights: Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* by Ren Hathway, Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* by D. J. Holman and Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* by Stuart L. Rivers. The *Report* is obtainable for £4.60 (incl. p&p) from the CBWPS, c/o Will Wagstaff, 42 Sally Port, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly TR21 0JE.

Twitching records

They said it, we didn't: 'On the whole, twitchers are a benign group, albeit of questionable sanity.' (Peter Ryan & Jane Turpie in *Birding in Southern Africa* 47: 92).

Peter Ryan is trying to assess the amount of money spent by twitchers on just one twitch—to see (or miss) Africa's first Little Blue Heron *Hydranassa caerulea*—and to discover the longest twitch, the most expensive twitch, and the worst dip; 'the best cases will be exposed to public ridicule in a future edition of *Birding in Southern Africa* . . .'.

Birds from horseback in Andalucia

There was a time when David Tomlinson's name was synonymous with fast cars: as the instigator of the original Great Bird Race, and founder of what has now become the County Birdrace, David pioneered the use of such unlikely cars as *Porsches*, *Aston Martins* and *Audi* Quattros in bird races. He has, however, now abandoned four wheels in favour of four legs, and is leading what he believes to be the first exclusive birdwatching holiday on horseback, in Andalucia this May. Participants in the holiday will ride from Algeciras to Ronda, following the ancient Moorish routeway. The trail passes through a wide variety of habitats and prime birding country, and participants will be sure to see lots of raptors, as well as such southern Spanish delights as Scops Owl *Otus scops*, Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura*, Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* and Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*. One day will be devoted to a non-motorised bird race, raising funds for BirdLife International; all profits from the holiday will also be donated to BirdLife International. Further details from David Tomlinson at Gourmet Birds, Windrush, Coles Lane, Brasted, Westerham, Kent TN16 1NN; tel: 01959 563627.

Volunteers needed to watch vultures

The Nature Reserves Authority of Israel will be running a vulture-nesting surveillance project in Gamla Nature Reserve from now through to September 1996, and needs volunteers to help with monitoring and recording. The commonest species at the Gamla River Canyon is Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, with a population of about 120 individuals. For more details, please contact Lia Court, Gamla Reserve manager, PO Box 70, Katzrin, Golan, Israel; fax: 972-6-921733; tel. 972-50-509930 (daytime) or 972-6-763511 (evenings only).

Mike Langman drawings

Many drawings by Devon county recorder Mike Langman will be on exhibition (and for sale) at Plympton Library, Harewood, Ridgeway, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon, during 12th-29th March. For further information, ring Librarian in Charge, Darrell Clegg (himself a *BB* subscriber), on 01752-337867.

Co-operation in biodiversity

We have always applauded co-operation between different conservation bodies. This seems to be the most sensible way to get messages heard and acted upon. The UK Biodiversity Steering Group, comprising countryside organisations, Government bodies, industry and academics, was set up by the Government in 1994, charged with preparing a report indicating how Britain's most threatened habitats and species could best be protected. Here, for the first time, and unique in the World, is a fully costed national recovery programme for species as diverse as Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* and Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*, Natterjack Toad *Bufo calamita* and Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*, Fen Orchid *Liparis loeselii* and Killarney Fern *Trichomanes speciosum*. Plans for habitats include lowland heathland, reedbeds and native Caledonian pinewoods. Conservation on a national scale does not come cheap, and we must await the Government's response (promised in spring 1996) to bills totalling over £16 million in 1997, rising to some £40 million by 2010.

. . . and dependent territories

The Empire is long gone, but scattered around the globe, from the Indian Ocean to the South Atlantic, from the Antarctic to the Mediterranean, are a small number of territories that are still United Kingdom dependencies. These range in size from the 6 km^2 of Gibraltar to the 1.7 million km^2 of the British Antarctic Territory.

Amongst the unique wildlife to be found in these widespread areas are the World's largest earwig *Labidura herculeana* on St Helena; 16 endemic bird species including Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila*; Romer's Tree Frog *Philautus romeri* in Hong Kong; and 59 endemic species of moss on Tristan da Cunha. Eight non-government organisations—including Fauna and Flora International, the Royal Botanic Gardens, the RSPB, the World Wide Fund for Nature UK and the Zoological Society of London—now provide the core support for the UK Dependent Territories Conservation Forum, which produces a newsletter, *Forum News*. Further information is obtainable from the Forum Co-ordinator, 14 Goose Acre, Cheddington, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 0SR.

Ups and downs of bird distribution

We have recently been browsing through Simon Holloway's *The Historical Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland 1875-1900* and looking at the changes in distributions between the latter years of the nineteenth century and those in the 1968-72 *Atlas*. This comparison takes no account of abundance, but is concerned purely with the number of counties in which a species was breeding. Sixty-one species showed no change at the ±5% level, 27 increased by 5-30%, 47 increased by 31-500% and seven species increased by over 500%, the top three being Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* 1,300%, Gadwall *Anas strepera* 1,400% and Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* a massive 3,400%. The decreases were far fewer, with 23 species down by 5-30% and 17 by more than 30%. 'Top' amongst the decreases were Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* 71%, Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* 72% and Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* 78%.

Not included are a range of species, such as Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*, that do not figure in both periods. One of the most striking elements of the maps is how much the decline in raptors had progressed prior to the last quarter of the previous century. The 'extinct' label is liberally sprinkled throughout *The Historical Atlas*.

Grants for young birdwatchers to visit Fair Isle

Awards are made annually from The John Harrison Memorial Fund, which is administered by the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust. John Harrison was a young birdwatcher who visited Fair Isle, Shetland, three times, but whose life was tragically cut short. The fund was set up in his memory by the late Richard Richardson. Grants, usually of around £150-£200, are given to help young people aged 15-21 with the cost of travel and their stay at the Observatory.

Successful applicants are responsible for making their own travel arrangements and for booking at the Observatory, where they must stay for a *minimum* of one week. They will be expected to help with the ornithological work of the Observatory. Application forms, and information about the Observatory and the type of work that may be undertaken can be obtained from the Warden, Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland ZE2 9JU.

Two new Rare Men

In addition to the early retirement of Graham Catley from the British Birds Rarities Committee already noted (*Brit. Birds* 88: 380), Chris Heard has now retired, in rotation as the longest-serving member.

The two vacancies have been filled by Doug Page, who has been co-opted onto the Committee since last May, and John McLoughlin, the only other nominee for the annual vacancy. Doug's official term started on 1st January, and John's will commence on 1st April.

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RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 15th January to 11th February 1996. These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Ullapool (Highland), 20th January; Sound of Harris (Western Isles), 10th February; Gruinard Bay (Highland), 11th February.

Mediterranean Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* Off Black Arch, Larne (Co. Antrim), on 27th January.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Wintering individual on North Slob (Co. Wexford), still present on 11th February.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* River Tavy (Devon), 23rd January; Chew Valley Lake (Avon), 28th January.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* St John's Loch (Highland), 1st-11th February.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Copperhouse Creek (Cornwall), 24th January to 11th February.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* First-winter, Nimmo's Pier (Co. Galway), 29th January and 4th February.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* Greatham Creek (Cleveland), 20th January.

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* In Britain: major influx into all areas, involving possibly 10,000 individuals, with the largest flocks in East Anglia, northeastern coastal counties of England and the Borders and Lothian regions of Scotland; in Ireland; about 200 individuals along all of east coast.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* Webheath (Worcestershire), 17th January to 11th February; Werrington, Peterborough (Cambridgeshire), 29th January to 11th February; Bristol (Avon), 8th-9th February.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* Near Halesowen (West Midlands), 6th-9th February.



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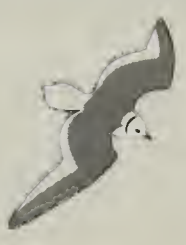
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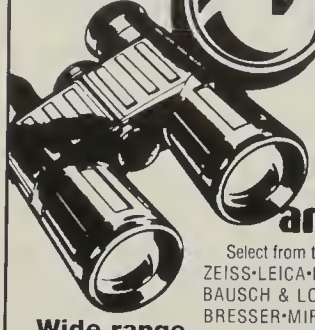
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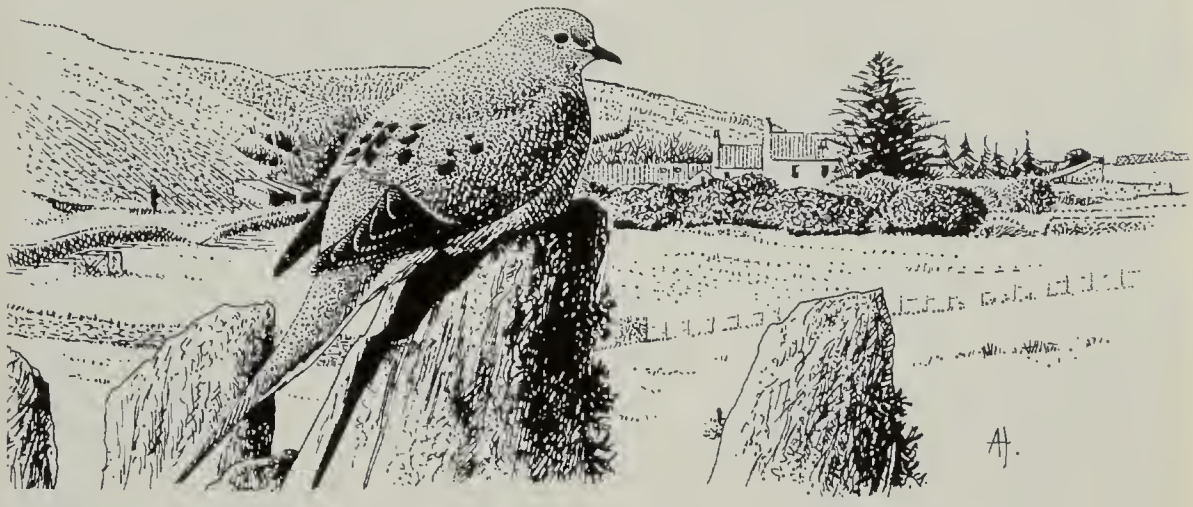
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Mourning Dove in the Isle of Man: new to the Western Palearctic

Aron Sapsford

ABSTRACT An exhausted Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* was trapped at the Calf of Man Bird Observatory on 31st October 1989. It has been accepted by both the British Birds Rarities Committee and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee as the first record of this North American species for Britain & Ireland (and also for the Western Palearctic).

On the Calf of Man, 31st October 1989 dawned very much like the previous few days, with a fresh southwesterly wind blowing and only a handful of thrushes and finches battling their way through.

Completing a net round at about 11.00 GMT, we drove one of the Heligoland traps near the Observatory and caught three Blackbirds *Turdus merula*. On moving around to the catching box to remove these, I noticed a small dove amongst them, not much bigger than the Blackbirds. I removed this and was immediately stumped as to its identity, having not seen anything like it before. The bird was placed in a bag and we returned to the Observatory. At this point, I assumed that it was probably going to turn out to be some escaped cage-bird.

Back at the Observatory, I made reference to several books covering areas of the Western Palearctic, but was still unable to find anything like it. At this point, Ian Fisher walked in and I asked him to take a look at it. His immediate response was: 'I've seen that before—in the States! I think it's a Mourning Dove [*Zenaida*

macroura].' Up to this point I had not considered that it might be a Nearctic vagrant, but reference to the National Geographic Society's *Birds of North America* confirmed Ian Fisher's identification. This put a completely new complexion on the whole event.

The dove had probably only just arrived, since it was in an exhausted state. Taking this into consideration, as full a description as the circumstances would allow was taken. The bird was then ringed, photographed (plates 69-71) and released into a sheltered part of the Observatory's garden. During the afternoon, it was seen to feed on some grain that had been put out for it, and we hoped that it would make a recovery. Unfortunately, it was found dead the next morning. This did, however, allow us to take further details and to preserve the skin, which is now on display in The Manx Museum.

Description

It was a small dove (see fig.1), probably about three-quarters the size of a Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*. The most striking feature was the tail, which was shaped like a long V, and this enabled us to eliminate the similar Zenaida Dove *Zenaida aurita*, which differs in having a much shorter, rounded tail and a white trailing edge to the secondaries. In the literature available at the time, Zenaida Dove appeared to be the only similar species (although Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* also suggested Passenger Pigeon *Ectopistes migratorius* [!]).

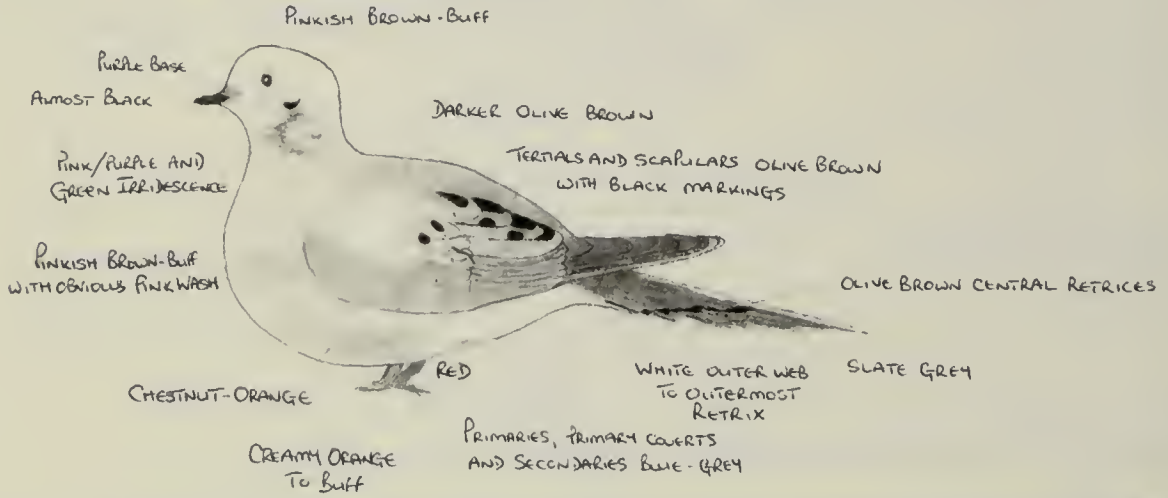


Fig. 1. Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*, Calf of Man, Isle of Man, October/November 1989 (*Aron Sapsford*)

UPPERPARTS Forehead, crown, nape and lores pinkish-brown/buff, although showing blue-grey tinge to crown feathers. Ear-coverts slightly greyer. Sides of neck as head, but with pink/purple-and-green iridescence. A small, almost semicircular black spot was situated about 10 mm below the eye, quite difficult to see unless feathers parted. Back darker olive-brown, which extended from back of neck to uppertail-coverts, although grey from flanks extended onto sides of rump.

Lesser and median coverts olive-brown (as back), with inner three lower median coverts having a black spot on outer web. Inner three greater coverts also olive-brown, with black spot on outer web, although rest of greater coverts blue-grey, as primary coverts. Scapulars olive-brown, with black on inner web extending three-quarters of length from base (see fig. 2). Tertials: four apparent tertials as scapulars, but (as greater coverts) also having black spot in centre of outer edge of outer web (see fig. 2). Primaries, secondaries and primary coverts blue-grey, except for outer two primary coverts, outer three primaries and 3rd and 4th secondaries, which were unmoulted and therefore brown and faded, with worn tips.





Plates 69-71. Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*, **Calf of Man, Isle of Man, 31st October 1989** (*Ian Fisher*)

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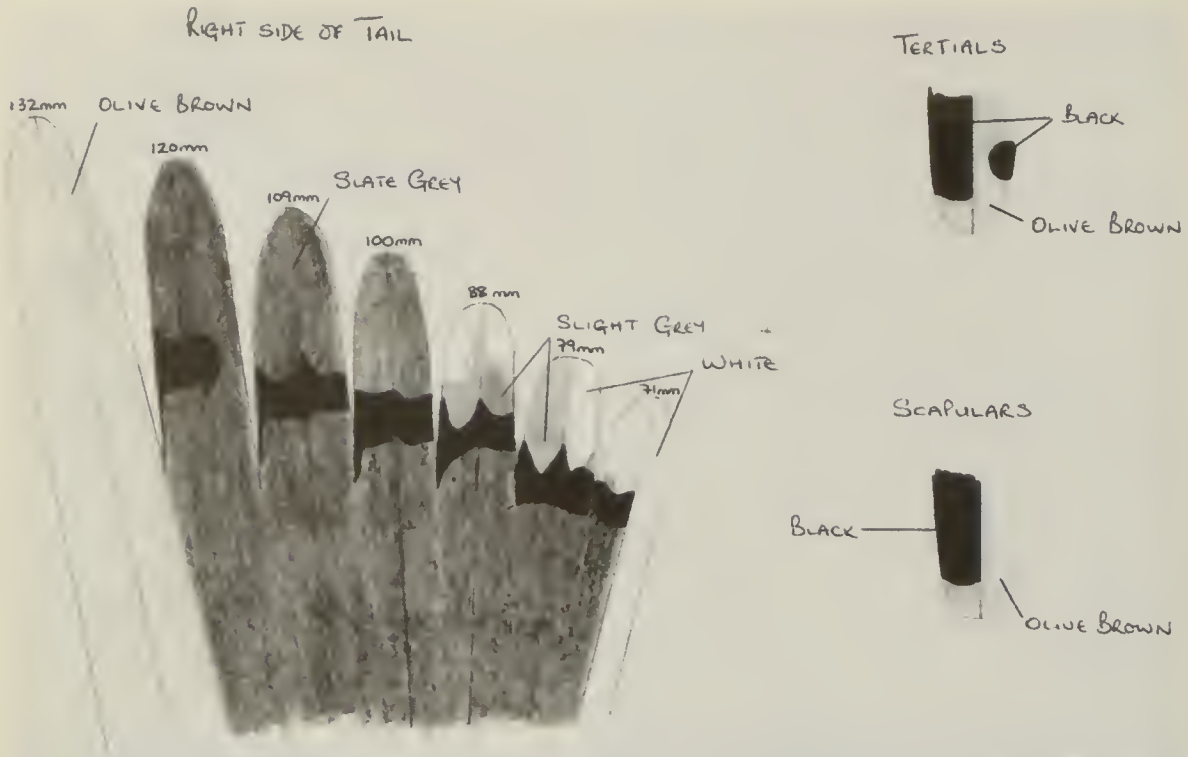


Fig. 2. Right side of tail, tertial tip and scapular tip of Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*, Calf of Man, Isle of Man, October/November 1989 (*Aron Sapsford*)

UNDERPARTS Chin whitish with buff wash. Throat and upper breast brown/buff with pinkish wash. Lower breast and belly darker, more chestnut/orange. Undertail-coverts creamy-orange to buff. Flanks, axillaries, underwing and underwing-coverts grey/smoky-blue.

TAIL Outer six feathers on each side slate-grey with black 'arrow-like' marks situated approximately three-quarters of the way down the feather (see fig. 2). Outer three rectrices had white from black marks to tip, and outermost had completely white outer web. Central rectrices olive-brown. The left central rectrix was being replaced (about one-quarter grown) and the 2nd-longest tail feather on the same side was missing. Tail shape was elongated V. Shortest tail feather 71 mm; longest 132 mm; distance from longest to shortest tail feathers 73 mm.

BARE PARTS Eye dark brown; pupil black; eye-ring green-yellow; eyelid purplish-blue. Upper and lower mandibles dark, almost black, with purple base. Legs pinkish-red; scales of feet greenish-yellow; claws blue-grey.

WEIGHT 83 g at 11.00 GMT 31st October; 78 g (post mortem) at 07.00 GMT on 1st November.

At the end of the season, I was able to visit the Natural History Museum, Tring, where I came across Eared Dove *Z. auriculata*, but that species was ruled out by its having a shorter and less pointed tail, and none of the skins that I examined showed any white in the tail. I also found two specimens of Mourning Dove that showed an almost identical moult sequence to the one on the Calf.

Aron Sapsford, 3 Main Road, Upper Foxdale, Isle of Man

EDITORIAL COMMENT Rob Hume, Chairman of the BBRC, has commented: 'There was no problem with the identification of this unfortunate dove, which was accepted on a single circulation of the BBRC (*Brit. Birds* 86: 496). The presence of 14 tail feathers rules out Zenaida Dove, which has only 12. This West Indian species also has white-tipped outer secondaries. Its tail pattern varies a little according to the race: *Z. a. aurita* and *Z. a. salvadorii* have pale grey or greyish-white tips to the outer feathers and white outer webs to the outermost pair, while

Z. a. zenaida is darker, with bluish tips and sides to the tail. The Eared Dove of South America may have white tips to the outer tail feathers, but its tail is shorter and more rounded. It also has two dark spots or lines on the cheeks, but these look narrow, and a dark "crease" behind the eye and above the cheek-spot of at least some Mourning Doves gives a similar effect.'

Dr David Parkin, Chairman of the BOURC, has commented as follows: 'The skin was kindly sent by the Manx Museum to the Natural History Museum, where it was examined by Dr Alan Knox. There are only a few autumn specimens at Tring for comparison, but it could be identified as probably a male by the vinous underparts, good iridescence on the back and less-brown upperparts. The lightly mottled, brownish, retained primary coverts with pale tips indicated that it was a first-year bird. The dark upperparts matched those of the few eastern *carolinensis* specimens rather than *marginella.* The other races could also be eliminated, but are less likely to occur here naturally.

'Some of the tail feathers were quite worn, but there are late-autumn specimens at Tring with very abraded tails. There were no signs indicative of a period in captivity, and the age and race were both compatible with a natural origin. The mean weight of Mourning Doves in Illinois is given as 123 g for males and 115 g for females (*J. Wildlife Management* 21: 169), which is about 50% greater than the Calf of Man bird. This very low weight might suggest that the bird had flown across rather than been ship-assisted, and no doubt accounts for its weakened condition.

'Mourning Dove is abundant in eastern North America. It is a partial migrant, but disperses widely and is frequent on islands and ships, as well as in places such as Newfoundland, well northeast of its breeding range.

'The record was accepted by the BOURC on a single circulation, and Mourning Dove was admitted to the British List (*Ibis* 135: 220).'

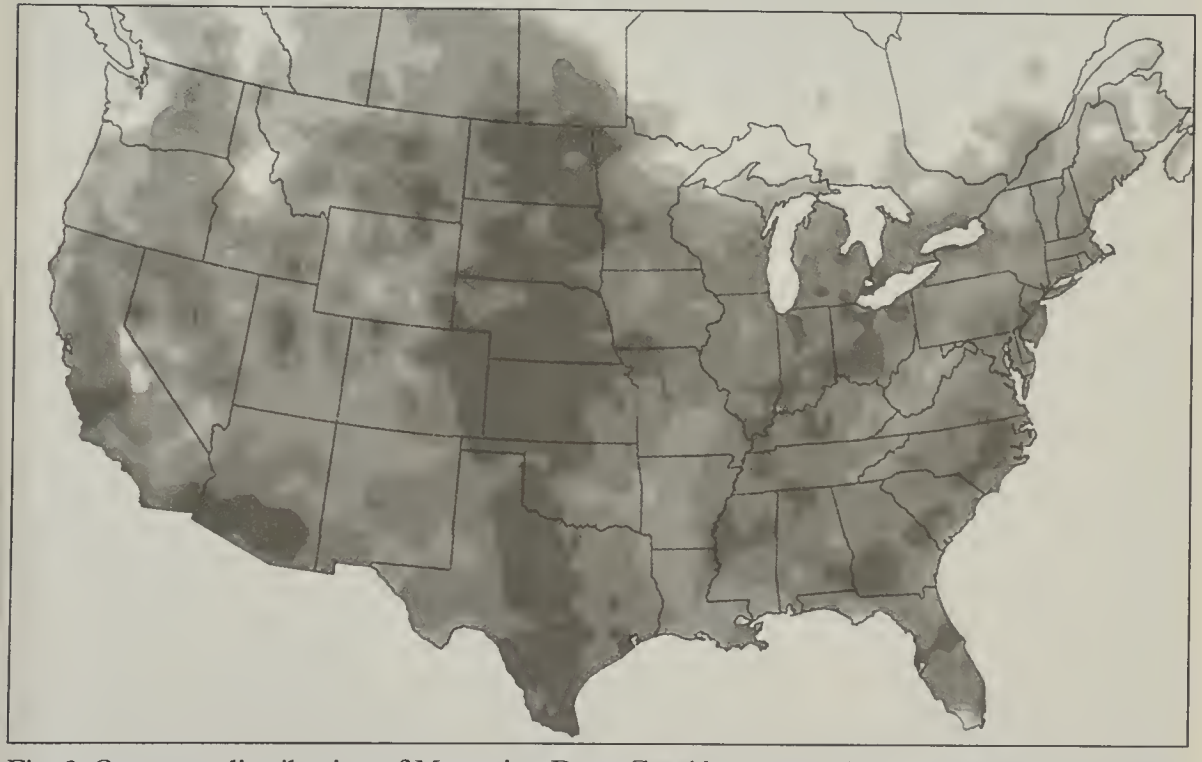


Fig. 3. Summer distribution of Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* (reproduced by permission of Academic Press from Price, Droege & Price, 1995, *Summer Atlas of North American Birds*)





Double-crested Cormorant in Cleveland: new to the Western Palearctic

T. J. Williams

ABSTRACT A Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* was present at Charlton's Pond, Billingham, Cleveland, during at least 11th January to 26th April 1989. It had probably arrived in early December 1988, when sightings began to be reported of a strange cormorant showing characteristics somewhat intermediate between Great Cormorant *P. carbo* and Shag *P. aristotelis*. This occurrence has been accepted by both the British Birds Rarities Committee and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee as the first record of this North American species for Britain & Ireland; it is, indeed, also the first for the Western Palearctic.

As it is usual to see the occasional Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* on my patch (Charlton's Pond in Billingham, Cleveland) during the winter months, one present sporadically from early December 1988 into January 1989 received no more than a cursory glance both from me and from several other birders, including several latterly looking for potential 'year ticks'. During this period, however, a birder leaving the pond mentioned to me in passing that there was a Shag *P. aristotelis* perched on the floating island. This piece of information immediately grabbed my attention as I had never seen a Shag on the reserve, of which I was at that time voluntary warden; my notorious interest in Charlton's Pond and my somewhat sedentary nature being the butt of some gentle leg-

FACING PAGE

Plates 72-76. Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*, **Charlton's Pond, Billingham, Cleveland, January 1989** (*top two, Robin Chittenden; third, Jeff Youngs; fourth, with Great Cormorant* P. carbo, *photographer not known; bottom, Robin Chittenden*)

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pulling over the years, I duly raced off to see the bird. On reaching the causeway between the two ponds, I observed the raft from a distance of some 300 m and saw the bird perched on the island. From that range, it was indeed a potential contender for Shag, so I made my way down the path on the east side of the Pond, which brought me to a position only some 100 m from the bird. I then observed it through my 8×40 binoculars and found myself looking at a Cormorant. Either we had both made a mistake or the Shag had flown off. I quickly scanned the Pond and left the area, cursing my bad luck. A few days later, a second birder reported seeing a Shag on the Pond. Thinking that the bird had returned, I again made my way to the east side of the Pond and again found myself looking at a Cormorant. This was getting ridiculous! What was going on? From the causeway, it looked like a Shag, but on closer examination was obviously a Cormorant. Now that I took the time to have a look at it for more than a few seconds, however, it did look small, but still had the jizz of Cormorant. Perhaps it was oiled, or was a small individual? It was only then that I started to scrutinise the bird with any real interest. What struck me immediately was the pattern of dark-and-light coloration on the underparts. While never having studied juvenile Great Cormorants particularly closely, I did realise that they had a dark upper breast and were paler below, the opposite of this individual. Once again, the oiled-bird theory came into play, or was it perhaps one of the European subspecies? Being by this time mildly interested, I decided to refer to field guides, and subsequently found that the variation in colour was very wide indeed, but pale upper underparts and dark lower underparts did not fit any juvenile variations. I was somewhat confused and decided to bring my 'scope the following day and peruse the bird more closely. It was then that I noticed the rather extensive yellowish coloration on the bill and gular pouch.

Having made some crude field sketches, I went home and referred to the European field guides, looking specifically at all plumages of Great Cormorant and Shag, paying particular attention to flesh configuration on face, and head shape. I ended up even more confused. The shape and extent of bare parts made it a Great Cormorant, but the absence of white (apart from a thin line bordering the gular pouch) was more like Shag. One idea I entertained was 'Shagorant': literally a Shag × Great Cormorant hybrid. I pored through my books, but could find no evidence of this ever occurring. If it *was* a hybrid, what would it look like? This bird was almost certainly nearer to Shag in general size, but more thickset, with a stout neck; the rump was more rounded in shape and like Shag, this being accentuated by the bird being in tail moult. In flight it had a distinct kink in the neck, more obvious when coming in to land (on taking off, the effort seemed to iron out this feature somewhat); the head was held above the level of the body in relaxed flight but the neck drooped. The underparts were blotchy brown, paler on the upper breast; on the closed wing, the wing-coverts were large compared with those of Great Cormorant and fewer in number; a pale centre to each feather gave a very scaly appearance; there was a secondary missing from the right wing. I was able to count eight outer tail feathers, but only four inners, which I estimated to be some 2½ inches (6 cm) shorter. The bill shape was that of a Great Cormorant, but looked more elongated owing to the long, orange gular pouch of this bird. This effect was further accentuated by a thin orange stripe from

the base of the upper mandible to the eye. The head shape appeared to be intermediate between Great Cormorant and Shag, rising fairly steeply from the base of the upper mandible and then sloping back to the crown. The eyes appeared bluish when seen head-on, the coloration and distribution of bare flesh gave a spectacled appearance, and everything seemed to be pointing to Double-crested Cormorant *P. auritus*. The gular pouch was, however, bordered with a thin white line of feathers, which led me to consider the possibility of Neotropic (Olivaceous) Cormorant *P. olivaceus*. The gape appeared to be white with a hint of pink. Feet and legs were black. When swimming with a Great Cormorant, it looked like a scaled-down version of that species, both in body shape and in angle of bill.

While I was watching the bird swimming with a Great Cormorant on 30th January, it adopted a strange diving pattern, following the Great Cormorant some 4 or 5 feet (1.2-1.5 m) behind, and slightly offset. Every time that the Great Cormorant dived, it would also dive, about two seconds later. This synchronised diving lasted about a minute and was so precise that the two birds appeared to be tied together.

On the evening of 30th January 1989, I telephoned M. A. Blick and we discussed the day's observations. During this discussion he informed me that one distinctive feature of Double-crested Cormorant was the feeding pattern we had observed that day. I was by now personally convinced that the bird was a Double-crested Cormorant, by virtue of both my previous observations and the information from MAB about the feeding behaviour. We jointly agreed to release news of the bird's identity. The following day, a number of birders duly arrived, including T. Francis, R. Little, D. J. Britton and M. Hallom, who all had previous experience of this species in North America. They concluded that the bird was indeed a Double-crested Cormorant. The bird was subsequently seen by at least 1,400 other birders and photographed by many, including Robin Chittenden, David Cottridge, Brian Little, David Tipling, Steve Young, Jeff Youngs and Pete Wheeler (*Brit. Birds* 82: plates 180-182; 89: plates 72-76). I made almost daily observations until it was last seen on 26th April 1989; it may have reappeared briefly on the morning of 16th June 1989.

The bird was often reluctant to fly on windless days, and, on the few occasions when these conditions prevailed, it became very agitated, swimming up and down, apparently casting about for some wind into which to take off.

The record of Double-crested Cormorant has been accepted for the dates 11th January to 26th April 1989 by both the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (*Ibis* 135: 220) and the British Birds Rarities Committee (*Brit. Birds* 86: 453-454). While the record was still being assessed, M. A. Blick wrote a short account of the occurrence (Blick 1989) and photographs were published in *British Birds* (82: 180-182).

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T. J. Williams, 47 Cowpen Estate, Billingham, Cleveland TS23 4AG

EDITORIAL COMMENT Rob Hume, Chairman of the BBRC, has commented: 'This was a difficult identification and full credit goes to Terry Williams for finding the bird, and to the few observers who provided information and photographers whose results helped to add further weight to the evidence. In particular, of the members of the BBRC at the time, D. J. Britton provided very detailed descriptions and invaluable discussion and deserves great credit for his part in the story. C. D. R. Heard also discussed the identification characters and pitfalls thoroughly in the initial circulation of the record and various other comments by Committee members, especially Keith Vinicombe, are made use of here.

'Identification of Double-crested Cormorant was covered in detail by Alström (1991) and an account of the Cleveland record was published soon after the occurrence (Blick 1989). The following additional points refer to those made in submitted descriptions and in comments and discussion during BBRC and BOURC circulations.

'Regarding size and shape, there is no simple rule: Double-crested Cormorant overlaps with Great Cormorant, which itself overlaps in some measurements with Shag. Great Cormorants of the race *sinensis* are smaller than those of the nominate race, with juveniles having a significantly longer tail and more slender bill (*BWP*). In terms of shape and jizz, the sometimes mooted "neck-crook" of Double-crested is now generally regarded as an unreliable distinction from Great, being characteristic of Double-crested in many circumstances but variable and dependent on posture for both species.

'The colour of the gular/loral skin is extremely variable on Great Cormorant. The Cleveland Double-crested was variously described as having "chrome-yellow" to "orange" skin (the gular skin most strongly orange in dull light, DJB). Immature Great Cormorant can have a "blood-orange" gular pouch (CDRH) and vivid yellow to orange loral skin. The extent to which the yellow-orange colour extends to the bill on Double-crested is distinctive and is well shown in photographs of the Cleveland individual. A dark line on the lores separating the yellow skin above from the throat beneath seems characteristic of Double-crested, but the feathers in this area on Great Cormorant are very fine filoplumes and are subject to wear, so the dark line on Double-crested may also wear away (KEV), accounting for its indistinctness on some photographs.

'The shape of the gular feathering can be a difficult feature to use in the field: the central point of the chin feathering on Great Cormorant may be difficult to see (CDRH), while *sinensis* has less feathering under the chin and at the sides of the throat than does *carbo*; this is a variable feature on *carbo* and we need to know more about the extent of the variability, although there is no suggestion that the squared, cut-off shape on Double-crested varies significantly.

'Compared with the Cleveland Double-crested, Great Cormorants nearby, examined by DJB, had less exposed gular skin (about one-third bill length), of a paler colour, with a long area of grey-white under the bill, whereas the Double-crested had yellow on the throat more than half of the bill length and extending right along the underside of the bill (DJB). The yellow beneath the bill was visible when the bird turned its head or, from in front, when it raised its bill, but in a normal side view it was hardly detectable.

'The feathering along the edge of the gular skin was pale, whitish only in a thin

line, which seems unlikely to be matched by Great Cormorant, which normally has much more extensive pale feathering in this area.

'The bill shape was questioned by some observers as being relatively thick, rectangular or parallel-sided, while Double-crested typically has a narrow-waisted shape to its bill. This seems genuinely to have been the case, although references to particular photographs to support this view were confused by the fact that the pictures showed the cormorant with its bill held slightly open and therefore apparently deeper than was actually the case. The bill shape and the presence of some pale feathering on the throat, albeit in a very thin band, are the only real substance for suggestions of hybrid origin for the Cleveland bird, which otherwise seems highly unlikely. The white throat band is in fact a normal feature of immature Double-cresteds in Texas (KEV). The idea of a hybrid being produced in North America, itself unlikely, followed by its vagrancy to Europe, seems improbably remote. Dr D. T. Parkin has pointed out that a more likely (but still improbable) possibility is for a Double-crested Cormorant to arrive as a vagrant, undetected, and pair with a Great Cormorant in Europe (in much the same way as the Farne Islands Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* has paired and bred with a Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis*), producing locally bred hybrid young. Nevertheless, there are no reasonable grounds for suspecting that the Cleveland cormorant was anything other than a pure Double-crested.

'The Cleveland Double-crested had blackish-grey legs, with dark-grey webs, paler toes and white, or greyish-white, claws, whereas Great Cormorants nearby had toes and webs of similar tone (or toes darker) and dark claws (DJB). Photographs of Double-cresteds reveal dark claws, and these differences, although genuine, may be of little significance.

'The number of tail feathers is a particularly "concrete" feature if it can be fully established. The Cleveland individual had the central four feathers short-grown (two on the left side short and rounded; one on the right slightly longer than these and more pointed, the other much shorter). These were still not fully grown on 7th April at least (DJB). The tail clearly showed 12 feathers, the outer four on each side full-grown (those on the right looking abraded to sharp points while those on the left looked blunt, DJB). A single inner primary was missing from the right wing (DJB).

'Alström (1991) suggested that a pale breast/dark belly contrast is characteristic of Double-crested, but "second-winter" Great Cormorants can show a similar effect, with new, dark belly feathers contrasting with old, brownish breast feathers (KEV).

'Considering all the information, there were never any arguments against the identification other than the speculative one concerning its possibly being a hybrid. Hundreds of observers tested their skills and optical equipment on the bird concerned, but the information in the BBRC file ensured acceptance, even had it not stayed for a long period. The clear descriptions of the colour and pattern of the bill, lores and gular pouch and the structure of the tail allowed acceptance of the identification on a single circulation.

'As a particularly useful contribution to the file, D. J. Britton's drawings (fig. 1, on page 168) and description (slightly edited) are added here:

Watched at 50 m in *Optolyth* 30×80 telescope for six hours. Took over two hours to come to a firm conclusion on identification. Not seen with Great Cormorant or Shag.

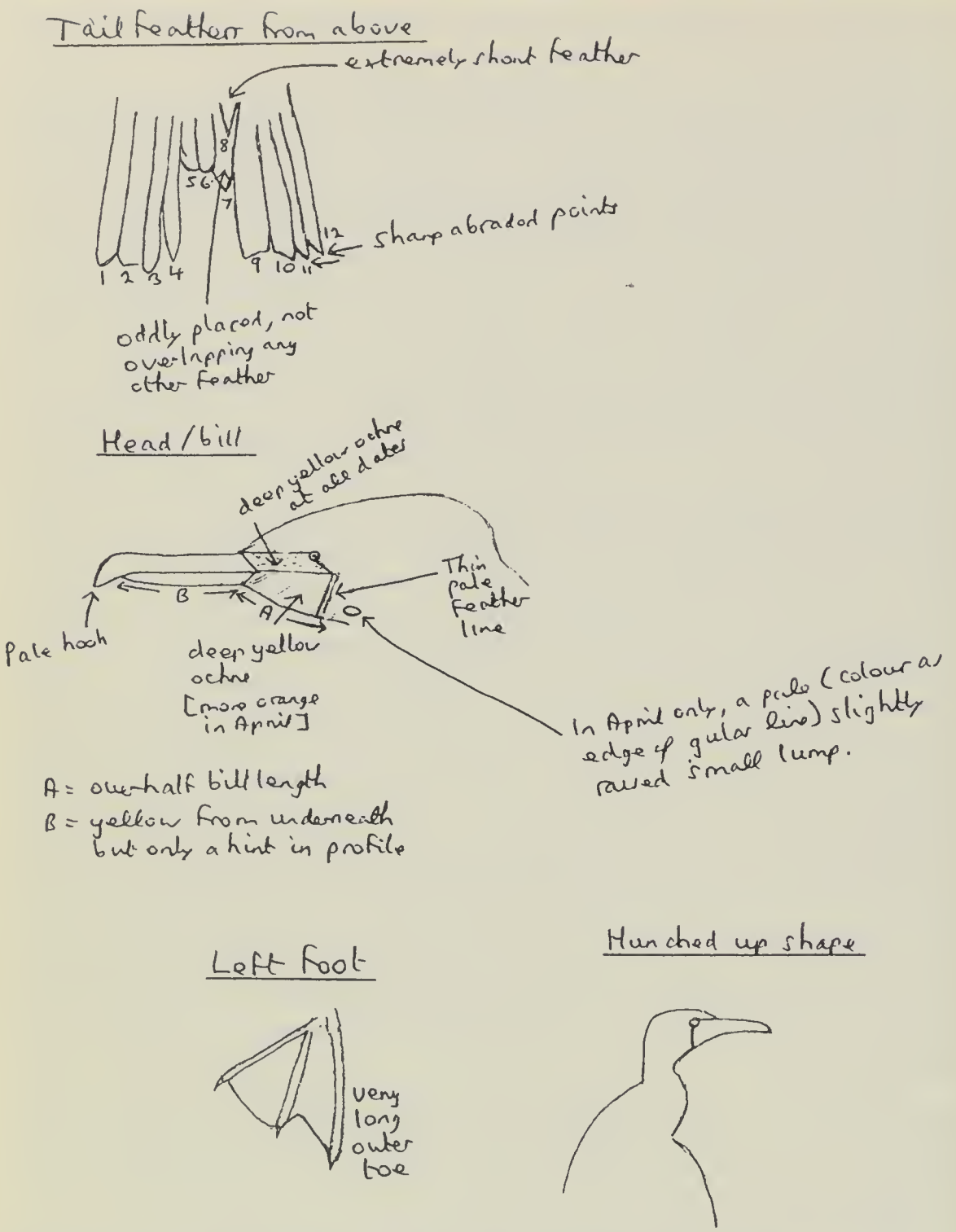


Fig. 1. Notes on Cleveland Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* supplied during circulation to the British Birds Rarities Committee (*D. J. Britton*)

GENERAL APPEARANCE Smallish cormorant. Neck quite thick, but seemed short. General colour dirty greyish-brown with some patchy paler feathers on breast. Rump and mantle very uniform, dark. Forehead shape smoothly sloping, slightly rounded, more like Great Cormorant than Shag, but at times showed short, steep forehead more like Shag. Precise details of head/bill and tail feathers crucial.

HEAD AND BILL Eye lovely emerald-green with black pupil. Facial skin extended to eye, dark intense ochre-yellow with faint orange tint at times. Rear border line of yellow extended back and down from eye at about 45°. Extent of yellow along throat over half bill length and extended right along underside of bill. Feathers adjoining base of gular patch pale-tipped, giving a thin off-white line along base

of yellow. Yellow slightly deeper at rear than front.

Upper mandible dark grey, grading to whitish-grey at cutting edge. Lower mandible very pale grey. In profile, a slight yellow tinge at times (perhaps reflection or the yellow underside showing).

UPPERPARTS Dirty greyish-brown. No green tinge on mantle, rump or scapulars at any time. Wing-coverts at times showed slight green sheen (contrasting with scapulars). When wings raised, flight feathers showed slight green sheen. Wing-covert feathers much smaller than scapulars, with neat, very thin dark brown edges and pointed tips (points at angle of 55° or 60°). Scapulars graded to paler tips and had fine dark shaft lines (not quite reaching feather tips); later seen to have thin, neat, dark greenish-grey outline. Primary coverts had thin off-white tips. From rear, head and neck darker than body, not obvious in profile.

UNDERPARTS Deep dirty greyish-brown with odd pale mottlings (seemingly on feather bases). Generally uniform but patchier on breast. Vent a deeper brown. Underwing uniform and very brown. "Armpits" a lovely deep brown. A single white feather around primary-coverts region. When flapped wings, showed very pale primary bases. Upper flanks deep dark green (wet?), extending in wedge down to thighs.

TAIL FEATHERS Clearly 12 feathers. Outer four each side seemed fully grown (right four abraded to pointed tips, left four blunt-tipped). Middle four very short and oddly shaped.

LEGS Dark blackish-grey. Stout.

FEET Webs dark grey. Outer toe very long, producing exaggerated foot shape. Oddly, right foot less exaggerated than left foot. Toes paler grey than webs. Claws white or very pale greyish.

MOUTH When open, roof whitish, but base reddish. Point of open mouth exactly coincided with rear edge of yellow-ochre gular area.

IN FLIGHT Neck angled up near base in heron-like kink. Short central tail feathers obvious. At least one missing primary on right wing.

BEHAVIOUR Dived without Shag-like leap (just sank). Swam with head angled upwards at 20°. One burst of about 20 very short, agitated dives with mouth slightly open.'

Dr David T. Parkin, Chairman of the BOURC has commented: 'More than one member of the BOURC remarked that it was especially fortunate that this bird

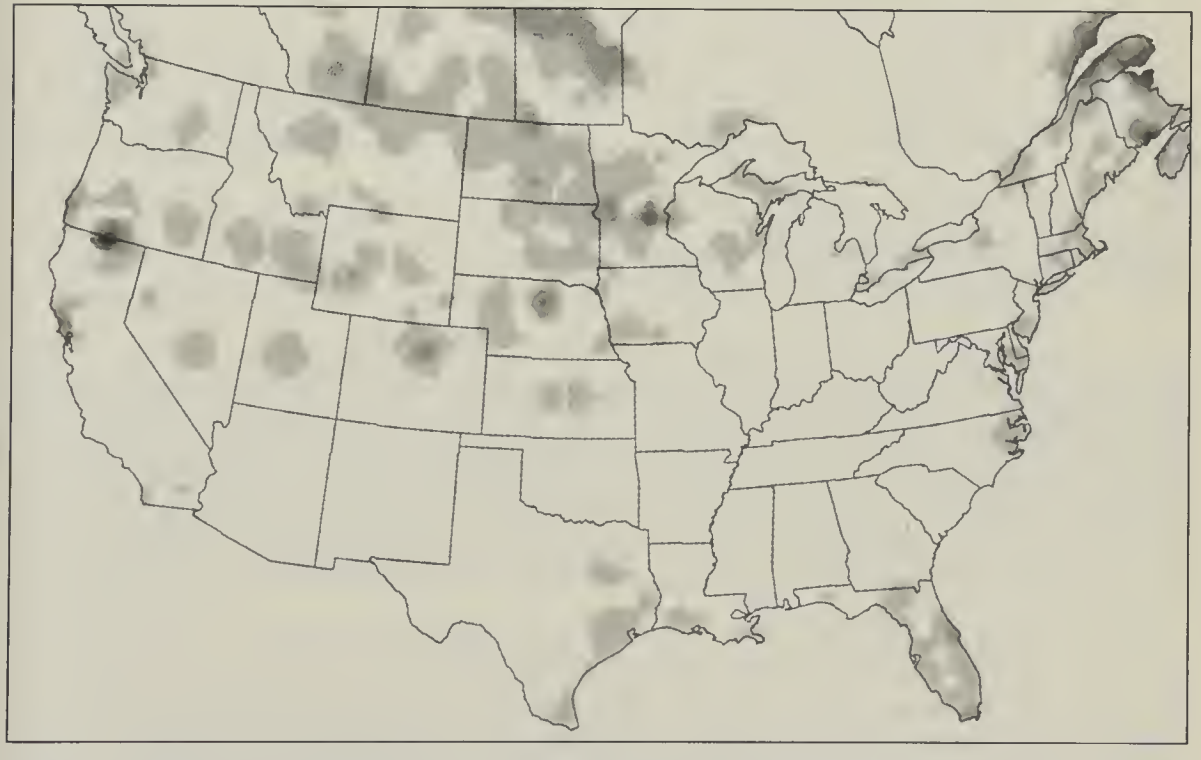


Fig. 2. Summer distribution of Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* **(reproduced by permission of Academic Press from Price, Droege & Price, 1995,** *Summer Atlas of North American Birds*)

remained at Charlton's Pond for so long: not only did it allow many observers to catch up with it, but it also ensured that observers could debate many of the critical features while it was still in residence. The many excellent photographs also assisted both committees in reaching their decision.

'This is not a rare bird in eastern North America, although its numbers have fluctuated in recent historical times. It was reported as increasing dramatically in the Great Lakes (up 450%) between 1977 and 1980 (Scharf & Shugart, 1981, *American Birds* 35: 910-911) and in Nova Scotia (up almost 300%) between 1971 and 1982 (Milton & Austin-Smith, 1983, *Colonial Waterbirds* 6: 130-138). It is migratory, with populations wintering in the southern USA. Although it is an inshore species, there are records from Bermuda, the Bahamas and Sable Island, so it is capable of crossing the ocean. As Tim Inskipp had no record of the species ever being advertised in the aviary-bird press, the likelihood of captive origin seemed very remote, and the record was accepted as being of a wild bird on a single circulation to the BOURC.

'One member expressed concern that this bird should have arrived on the east coast of Britain. Teesmouth is, however, a major sea terminal, and the possibility of assisted passage is not ruled out. This does not affect the decision, and the species was admitted to Category A of the British & Irish List (*Ibis* 135: 220).'

ZEISS

The inclusion with this paper of plates 72-76 in colour has been subsidised by support from *Carl Zeiss Ltd*, sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee.



LOOKING BACK

One hundred and fifty years ago: '*Notes on the partial migration and local shiftings of certain Birds in East Lothian, and a few Remarks on the subject in general, as applied to Scotland and the North of England.* By ARCHIBALD HEPBURN, Esq . . . Song-thrush, *Turdus musicus* [*T. philomelos*]. Departs annually about the end of October or beginning of November and returns early in February; two or three solitary individuals may be seen during winter, but I have ascertained from my friends, Thomas Durham Weir, Esq. of Boghead, West Lothian, and Mr. Jerdon in Roxburghshire, that this migration or shifting also takes place in their respective neighbourhoods.' (*Zoologist* 4: 1332-1333, April 1846)

Twenty-five years ago, in April 1971: 'Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* were exceptionally widespread—compared with only a handful in April 1970—and at least 70 were seen in 40 localities, mainly in eastern Britain from Norfolk northwards, in the London area, on the Kent coast and in the north and west Midlands . . . 42 of the 70 were apparently new arrivals, recorded between 3rd and 12th, all but six on the east coast, with a clear peak (a total of 22) on 5th, 6th and 7th, suggesting a westerly drift of Continental winterers rather than a return movement of British ones.' (*Brit. Birds* 64: 335)



Owls of the Moscow Region

V. V. Kontorshikov, O. S. Greenchenko, A. V. Ivanov, A. P. Petrisheva, A. V. Sevrugin and N. G. Chelintsev

ABSTRACT Of the 12 species of owl occurring in the Moscow Region of Russia, recent surveys and census work have revealed that Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* and Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum* are much more frequent than had been thought; Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* has increased remarkably; and Great Grey Owl *S. nebulosa* has been proved breeding for the first time. On the other hand, Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* has decreased. Little Owl *Athene noctua* and Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* are scarce; Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, Short-eared Owl *A. flammeus* and Tawny Owl *S. aluco* are common; Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* and Hawk Owl *Surnia ulula* are rare migrants.

Twelve species of owl occur in the Moscow Region of Russia, which has an area of 47,000 km^2 and a human population of more than 15 million. Woods cover 37.6% of the area (Akimova *et al.* 1994), mostly mixed forests of birch *Betula*, alder *Alnus* and Aspen *Populus tremula*, with spruce *Picea* in the west and pine *Pinus* in the east, and many clearings of different ages.

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Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* and Hawk Owl *Surnia ulula* are rare migrants. Nesting of Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*, Little Owl *Athene noctua*, Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* and Great Grey Owl *Strix nebulosa* is rare or only probable, and Ural Owl *S. uralensis* is a scarce nesting species. Only five species are relatively common: Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, Short-eared Owl *A. flammeus*, Tawny Owl *S. aluco*, Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* and Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum* (see plate 88, on page 201).

The estimates of breeding density given below relate to four species for which the peak of courting behaviour in the Moscow Region is in March. They occur mostly in large tracts of forest (with areas of 10-200 km^2) on the edges of the region; the estimates have been derived by calculation from data collected on transects totalling 501 km (Kontorshikov *et al.* 1994).

Long-eared Owl is the commonest owl of the Moscow Region (Ptushenko & Inozemtsev 1968). During 1969-89, nesting density fluctuated from one to 13 broods in 50 km^2 of the agricultural fields, villages and patches of forest in the west of the region (Voronetsky 1991). The spring (March) counts did not coincide with the peak of Long-eared Owl courtship, which in the Moscow Region is mostly in April. Numbers discovered vary: during 8th-10th March 1990, six males were registered per 35 km in an area of swampy bushes and meadows alternating with patches of forest; in the following year, 22 males per 50 km were counted at the same place in the same period, but a month later, on 13th April 1991, the value was five males per 2 km (Kontorshikov *et al.* 1994). Long-eared Owls are regular in winter, with up to 30 observed together.

Tawny Owl and Long-eared Owl are the two commonest species of the Central Russian owl avifauna. In mixed coniferous-deciduous forest close to Moscow, Tawny Owls nest at a density of one to two pairs per km^2 (Korolkova & Korneeva 1982; Korolkova & Bykov 1985). Estimates based on spring counts give on average 0.40 courting males per km^2 in fir-dominant woods of the western part of the region, 0.58 in pine-dominant woods of the southeast and 0.16 in those of the northeast, and 0.73 in birch-alder woods of the northeast. The density may be higher in the central area of the region away from the large mixed and coniferous forest tracts on the periphery.

Short-eared Owl is common in the Moscow Region, though numbers have declined from last century's level. Numbers fluctuate from year to year. The only report concerning density is of up to nine or ten pairs in about 50 km^2 of bushes, meadows and swampy fields in Voskresensky county in 1984 (Zubakin *et al.* 1988). Short-eared Owls sometimes occur in the Moscow Region in winter.

According to Ptushenko & Inozemtsev (1968), Tengmalm's Owl was thought to be rare and sporadic, but courting males were registered in every place where early-spring counts were recently carried out. The average density in fir-dominant mixed woods of the western part of the region is 0.41 courting males per km^2, while in pine-dominant mixed woods of the eastern part the density is 0.2 per km^2 (Kontorshikov *et al.* 1994). Thus, Tengmalm's Owl is currently quite common in large coniferous woods. It was probably just as common earlier this century, but, because of its secretive behaviour, was overlooked.

Similarly, some authors have suggested that the Pygmy Owl was rare in the region (Ptushenko & Inozemtsev 1968), but the recent organised counts show that it is quite common. The average density in mixed forests dominated by

conifers is 0.24 courting males per km^2, while in the northeastern pine-mixed forest it is 0.52 per km^2.

Eurasian Scops Owl has always been considered rare in the Moscow Region (Ptushenko & Inozemtsev 1968), and still is: we know of only six records of courting males since 1980 (Kontorshikov *et al.* 1994).

Similarly, the Little Owl occurs sporadically, mostly in the southern part, but we know of only eight records of singles since 1980: four in spring, one in summer and three in autumn.

At the end of the last century, the Ural Owl was *assumed* to be a very rare nesting species in the Moscow Region, although breeding had never been proved. In the second half of this century, the population has increased remarkably in the northwest of Russia, and the breeding area has spread to the southwest (Pukinsky 1977), into the Moscow Region (Mishenko *et al.* 1990). Recent spring counts show a density of 0.27 courting males per km^2 in mixed forests dominated by conifers in the northern part of the region, and 0.06 courting males per km^2 in the southeastern mixed pine-birch-alder forests (Kontorshikov *et al.* 1994).

Eagle Owls used to be common in old wild forests. Since the end of the last century, a marked decrease paralleled the gradual disappearance of large forest tracts and marshes. Isolated pairs bred in the Moscow Region in the 1950s and 1960s (Ptushenko & Inozemtsev 1968; B. L. Samoilov & G. V. Morozova *in litt.*), but it is now found very seldom, though isolated pairs probably still breed in the Moscow Region.

In the last century, the Hawk Owl was believed to be very rare in the forests of the Moscow Region, though exact details of the finding of nests and nestlings are absent. It occurred regularly in winter during the last century and the first half of this century, sometimes in large numbers. The southern boundary of the breeding area of the species has, however, apparently moved considerably to the north throughout the whole of Central Russia, and for the last 50 years we know of only four reliable records of Hawk Owl in the Moscow Region, all singles from October to April (Butiev *et al.* 1983; M. L. Kreindlin *in litt.*; B. L. Samoilov & G. V. Morozova *in litt.*), and nesting is unknown, even in nearby regions.

Great Grey Owl was always believed to be rare in Central Russia. There were only five isolated winter and autumn records in the Moscow Region (Ptushenko & Inozemtsev 1968) until 1992. During the springs of 1992-94, however, four courting males were found in the northern part of the region (S. V. Volkov, M. Y. Plets & T. V. Konovalova *in litt.*) and in 1994 successful nesting was documented in the northwestern part of the Moscow Region (Nikolaev in press). Previously, the closest nests were found about 250-300 km to the north of Moscow (Zinoviev & Nikolaev 1990).

The Snowy Owl occurs in the Moscow Region only as a migrant, in small numbers during September-April, most frequently in October-November, and very rarely in summer.

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank the many professional and amateur ornithologists who took part in organised counts. We also thank all those who provided information on individual records of rare species. We thank Dr V. A. Zubakin for critical reading of the manuscript, and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock for stylistic corrections to the English text.

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NOTES

Parasitic feeding by Red-crested Pochard

On 8th March 1988, at Wellington Country Park, Hampshire, I watched the feeding behaviour of a Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*. It frequently dived, as well as upending, and also swam close to the tail end of a Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*, collecting weed stirred up by the swan's feet. On several occasions, however, it stole food from a drake Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* as the latter surfaced from a dive. Although such behaviour is not unexpected, *BWP* (vol. 1) makes no mention of parasitism by the Red-crested Pochard.

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Antagonistic behaviour of feeding Common Snipe

From midday until 13.00 GMT on 22nd November 1992, on land belonging to Shotton Paper Company, Deeside, Clwyd, I watched a group of seven Common Snipes *Gallinago gallinago* feeding within an area no more than 10 m square along the edge of a lagoon. From a distance of about 50 m, I had a good, clear view of all seven through 7×50 binoculars and noted the following antagonistic behaviour.

When one snipe intruded upon the feeding area of another, the latter would first turn its back towards the intruder, cock its tail and slightly fan the feathers, revealing the pattern of a black letter 'T' across the underside tips and down the centre of the undertail-coverts (fig. 1; this dark vertical line is visible only in this posture, being hidden once the feathers are flattened); with head down and tail up, it would then walk backwards towards the intruder. This always had the effect of forcing the intruder to back away. This behaviour, which was exhibited by more than one individual, occurred only during feeding; when a previously aggressive snipe was preening or just sitting, it could be approached by another without retribution. An intruder would turn aggressor when it found a feeding patch of its own.



Fig. 1. Rear view of Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* displayed to another snipe intruding on its feeding area (*Ron Plummer*)

J. Lewis Bonhote (1909, *Birds of Britain*) described how a Common Snipe would back up to a tussock of grass with its head down and tail up, causing the two dorsal stripes to resemble grass. *BWP* (vol. 3) mentions

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similar behaviour, but with the snipe facing the intruder, lowering its head, raising its tail to show black spots or 'eyes' on the upperside of the feathers, then approaching the intruder with bill parallel to the ground. I can find no reference, however, to the rear-first posture and antagonism which I witnessed.

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RARITIES COMMITTEE NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Doug Page was co-opted to membership of the BBRC in May 1995 to fill the vacancy created by Graham Catley's retirement (*Brit. Birds* 88: 380). At the end of the year, following invitations for nominations in the birdwatching Press, a single nomination for membership was received: John McLoughlin of Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

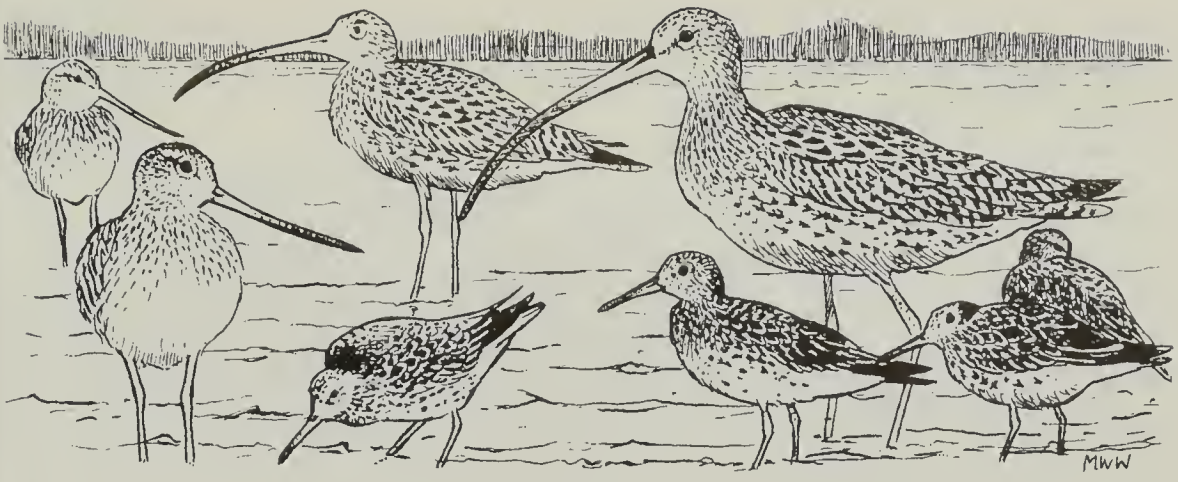
In March 1996, Chris Heard retired as longest-serving member in the usual way. Doug Page has, therefore, been confirmed as a full member, and John McLoughlin is elected onto the Committee in the absence of any other candidates.

We are delighted to welcome them both. Doug has already proved to be the ideal Committee member, and we are confident that 'Johnny Mac' will prove a popular successor to Chris Heard. Both have the experience, judgment and proven ability in the field that are necessary, as well as being well known and well liked by many of the most active rare-bird watchers in the UK.

Nevertheless, to lose Chris Heard is something we all regret. Chris has invariably provided thoughtful, well-argued and exceptionally knowledgeable contributions to the record-assessment process. As a high-profile figure in the birding world, with a deserved reputation for exceptional abilities in the field, he is clearly difficult to replace. We hope to persuade him to maintain his links with the BBRC and, perhaps, he will be able to contribute more published material based on our extensive files of descriptions, correspondence and lively debate.

Meanwhile, please begin to think about nominations for next year. I am happy to discuss possibilities at any time and welcome names (with those of two nominators) prior to 31st October 1996. We are considering a number of ways to extend the system of voting beyond the present county recorders and bird-observatory wardens, in order to be as democratic as possible; but, unless we have more nominations, elections become academic.

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Palearctic waders in Western Australia

C. D. T. Minton and R. J. Chandler

ABSTRACT Together with Hong Kong (*Brit. Birds* 86: 231-242), the northern shores of Western Australia provide an irresistible magnet for shorebird enthusiasts, with huge numbers of species such as Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* and Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* which are scarce on a World scale yet have occurred as vagrants to Western Europe. This paper, which briefly summarises the status of all wader species in NW Australia, is illustrated by photographs obtained on a special trip to the area.

The northern part of Western Australia (hereafter NW Australia) was 'discovered' as an important area for waders in 1981, in the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union's Wader Census Programme. During this census, the whole of the 8,000-km coastline of northern Australia was covered by an aerial survey, with extensive follow-up on the ground to determine flock compositions. The greatest surprises of the survey were not only the absolute numbers of Palearctic waders (about 1.5 million), but also the fact that the area held many flocks of thousands of Great Knots*. This species was previously thought to be rare, with numbers possibly totalling only 5,000 worldwide. It is now known that during the Northern Hemisphere winter there are typically 320,000 Great Knots in Australia, with 180,000 of them in NW Australia.

Many other species of Palearctic wader spend the non-breeding season in NW Australia; indeed, all the species occurring in the largest numbers are from the Palearctic. After Great Knot (plate 77), the most numerous are Bar-tailed Godwit

*Scientific names are given in table 1.

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of the race *baueri* (plate 83), Red Knot, Greater Sand Plover (plate 81), Little Curlew, Red-necked Stint (plate 84), Oriental Pratincole, Curlew Sandpiper, Oriental Plover, Red-capped Plover, Terek Sandpiper (plate 82), and Grey-tailed Tattler (plate 80). These are the 12 most numerous species, each occurring in numbers in excess of 10,000, of which only the Red-capped Plover is an Australian species. The numbers of the different wader species involved are summarised in table 1.

Table 1. Minimum estimates of wader numbers in northern Western Australia. Non-Palearctic species (Australian endemics) are shown in square brackets. Data from Watkins (1993).

Species (in order of importance)		Numbers
1	Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*	180,000
2	Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*	100,000
3	Red Knot *Calidris canutus*	90,000
4	Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*	60,000
5 =	Little Curlew *Numenius minutus*	50,000
5 =	Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*	50,000
7	Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*	35,000
8	Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*	30,000
9	Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus*	20,000
10	[Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus*]	15,000
11	Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*	12,000
12	Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*	11,000
13	Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*	8,000
14	Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*	6,000
15	Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*	5,000
16 =	Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*	3,000
16 =	Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*	3,000
18 =	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*	2,000
18 =	[Red-necked Avocet *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*]	2,000
18 =	Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*	2,000
18 =	Sanderling *Calidris alba*	2,000
22 =	Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*	1,500
22 =	Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*	1,500
24	[Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus longirostris*]	550
25	Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*	500
26	Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*	250
TOTAL		690,300

Other Palearctic species occur in smaller numbers, including Broad-billed Sandpiper (plate 78), Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Lesser Sand Plover (plate 79), Far Eastern Curlew, Pacific Golden Plover, Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, and Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* (Chandler 1995). The first four species occur in thousands, the remainder in lesser numbers. Altogether, 50 species of wader—almost one-quarter of the World's species—have been recorded in NW Australia.

The main wader locations in NW Australia are Broome/Roebuck Plains, 80 Mile Beach and Port Hedland Saltworks, and these sites have been visited by 16 wader-study expeditions since 1981. Some of the expeditions were large

Plates 77-84. Waders in Western Australia in March/April 1995 (*R. J. Chandler*). All are in adult summer plumage.

ZEISS The inclusion of these plates in colour has been subsidised by financial support from *Carl Zeiss*, sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee.



77. Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, March 1995 (*R. J. Chandler*)
78. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus sibirica*, April 1995 (*R. J. Chandler*)

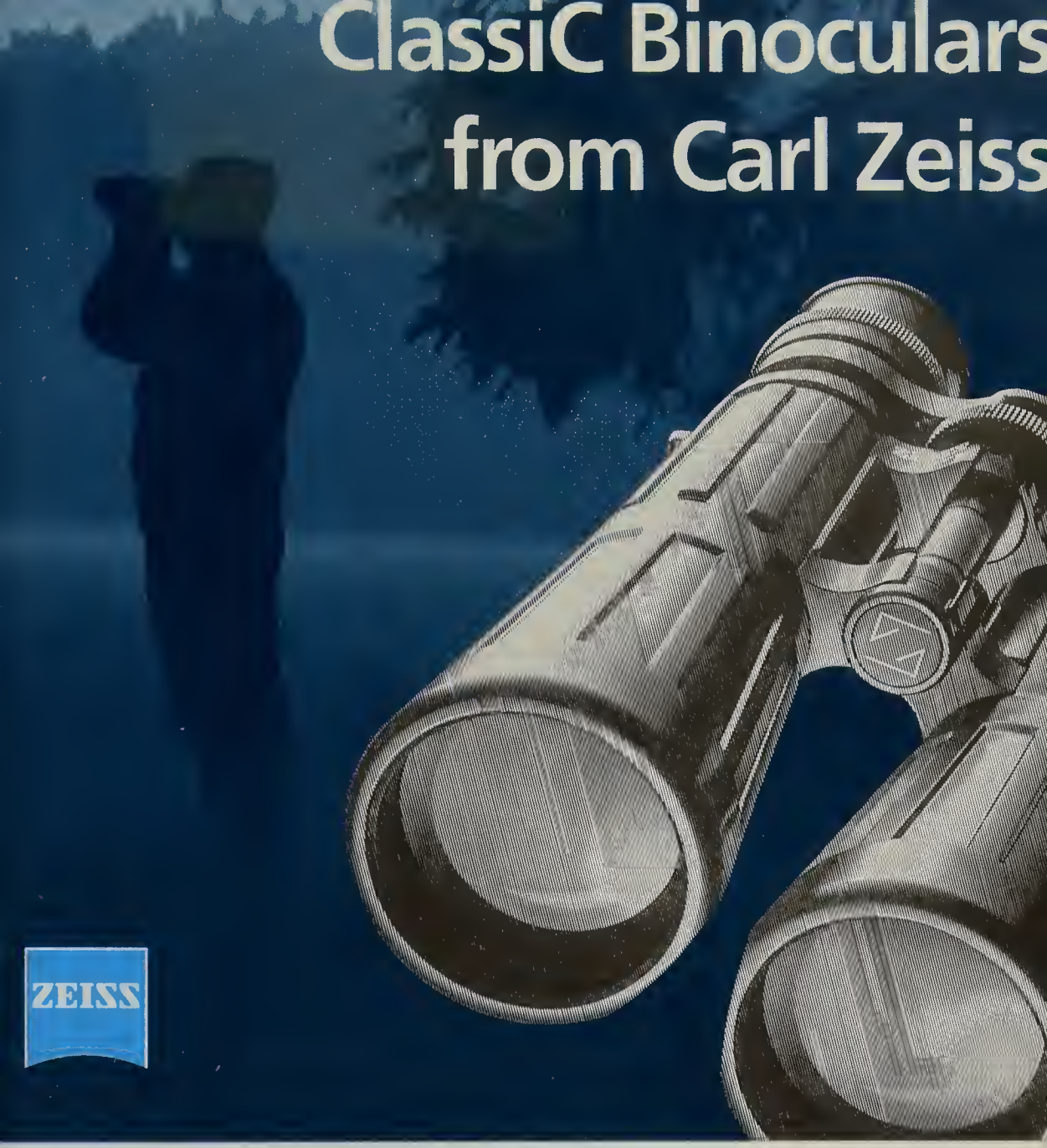




79. Male Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, April 1995 (*R. J. Chandler*)
80. Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*, March 1995 (*R. J. Chandler*)



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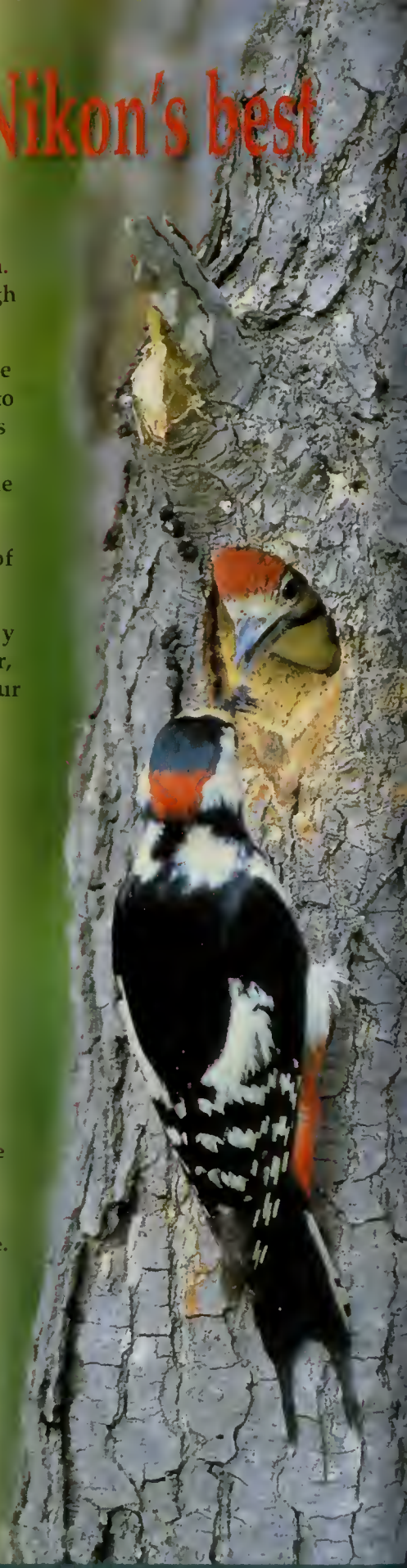
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81. Male Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, March 1995 (*R. J. Chandler*)
82. Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, March 1995 (*R. J. Chandler*)



83. Male Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica baueri*, March 1995 (*R. J. Chandler*)
84. Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*, April 1995 (*R. J. Chandler*)

(25 people for two months), some small (five people for one week). These have included, at all three main locations:

1. Ground and aerial surveys (additional to the now-standard summer and winter monitoring counts of specified areas).

2. Ringing (cannon-netting and mist-netting), with a total of around 45,000 waders caught to date.

3. Migration-watching, using meteorological radar initially, and more recently by observing the departures on northward migration in March/April. Totals of 20,000-30,000 waders have been seen to depart each year from Broome alone.

4. Photographic studies.

Ringing and other studies

Ringing recoveries show that, on northward migration, the Chinese coast is a key stopover site for almost every species of wader. The Shanghai area (Yangtse estuary and its adjacent shores) is especially important, with virtually all the Great Knots, Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knots using that area.

Weight gains of 50-80% are made by all species before departure. There is much direct and indirect evidence that all but the smallest species fly non-stop direct from NW Australia to the Chinese coast, a distance of 5,500 km and a flight of three days' duration. On southward migration, the birds are more spread out than on northward migration, and Korea and Japan are important stopover sites. Curlew Sandpipers do a loop migration, with southbound recoveries mostly occurring well to the west of the northward route, with one recovery as far west as southern India.

The annual pattern

Waders are present in good numbers throughout the year in NW Australia, with totals still in the thousands even during the Northern Hemisphere summer. This is because the one-year-olds of almost all species do not migrate north until their second year, or not until their third, fourth, or even fifth year in the case of the larger waders. There is also a tendency for the resident Australian waders to flock during the Australian winter ('dry season' in northern Australia).

For the wader enthusiast, perhaps the best time to visit is in March/April, when most waders are in breeding plumage prior to their northward departure. Some species, however, for example Far Eastern Curlew and Oriental Plover, mostly depart in early March, and the majority of several other species do so before the end of March, particularly Little Curlew and Oriental Pratincole.

Wader numbers build up again from late August to October, as they return from the north, though arrivals start with Far Eastern Curlews in early August. At this time, many adults are still in breeding plumage; indeed, Grey Plovers, which are unlike most of the other species in migrating north while still in non-breeding plumage, are seen in Australia in breeding plumage only at this time.

The photographs

The photographs (plates 77-84) show Palearctic waders in NW Australia during March/April. At this time, most individuals that are due to migrate to the Palearctic

have largely acquired breeding plumage, while there are also immatures in non-breeding plumage that will remain in Australia.

Those species that use the coastal mudflats are most easily photographed at high-tide roosts, where a number of the accompanying photographs were taken. At the highest spring tides some species may use the rocks or low cliffs around Roebuck Bay, but at neap tides all species roost at the head of the beach. They range up the shore depending mainly on size of species: Far Eastern Curlews and Bar-tailed Godwits in or at the water's edge; Great and Red Knots just at the edge of the water, where Red-necked Stints, Ruddy Turnstones and Sanderlings often continue to feed amongst them, while Greater Sand Plovers are likely to congregate in single-species groups well up the beach.

The inland, freshwater wader species have to be photographed using wait-and-see techniques from a hide set up in favoured feeding areas. Those photographed in this manner included Broad-billed Sandpiper and Lesser Sand Plover.

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Appendix 1. Habitats

Roebuck Bay, Broome, is a 25-km diameter bay just to the east of Broome, with vast tidal mudflats. There are high-tide roosts of 50,000 waders on the north-shore beaches, and of 100,000 waders at the rather inaccessible Bush Point area at the south entrance to the bay. The northern shores are highly accessible and have the light always behind the observer, which was one of the factors leading to the choice of the location for the Broome Bird Observatory.

Roebuck Plains is a 30 km × 20 km area of flat grassland inland of Roebuck Bay. Up to 50,000 Little Curlews have been seen there, together with thousands of Oriental Pratincoles.

80 Mile Beach, which commences 200 km south of Broome and extends 150 km southwest towards Port Hedland, has mixed-species flocks dominated by Bar-tailed Godwits and Great Knots, with a density of up to 5,000 waders per kilometre.

Port Hedland Saltworks was discovered in April 1982 by a wader team on its way from Perth to continue the wader studies which had commenced at Broome in August 1981. The section of the saltworks that is attractive to waders is situated some 30 km northwest of Port Hedland. An exceptional 6,000 Broad-billed Sandpipers was counted in March 1987, the World's largest known concentration of the species. It has also been a regular site for up to 140 Asian Dowitchers, and is a primary arrival area for Oriental Plovers, of which 30,000 were seen in November 1983.

Appendix 2. Birding in the Broome area

Climate governs personal comfort in NW Australia. January-February is the main wet season, when it is very humid with up to 300-400 mm of rain, including the occasional cyclone. April to October is the dry season, with light rain perhaps on a couple of occasions in this seven-month period. It can still be hot (35°C) in April and October, but is exceptionally pleasant in the other months (25°-33°C, with cool nights) in the dry season. The initial contact point and best base is Broome Bird Observatory (address: PO Box 1313, Broome, WA 6725, Australia).

Broome Bird Observatory was set up by the RAOU in 1988, and is wardened throughout the year. It provides catered and uncatered accommodation (partially air-conditioned), and camping and cooking facilities for visitors.

LETTERS

European Storm-petrels and other seabirds without their toes

In response to the note by Keith Bowey (*Brit. Birds* 88: 111) concerning the incidence of damage to both the feet and the legs of European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus*, I would draw attention to an extract from *Wild Birds at Home* (1909) in which Peter Webster states, in notes accompanying his photographs:

'A very remarkable feature of the storm-petrel is that comparatively few birds have perfect feet. Either a whole claw, or a portion of one is missing, or in some cases it is very much dwarfed or deformed.'

Unfortunately, none of the six relevant photographs in the book shows such damage; nor does the text shed any light on where Mr Webster took his photographs, or the total number of birds he examined.

Much as we may dislike the thoughtless use of nylon nets and lines, damage to the legs of storm-petrels was in evidence well before their use by the fishing industry.

Jim Stonehouse
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In Malta, we have ringed over 16,700 European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* since 1968. We have also noted that, occasionally, one has some toes, a foot or part of the tarsus missing. Although we have not kept a record of all the birds with such deficiencies, we reckon that at least 1% of our birds had such bodily damage.

One of the questions asked by Keith Bowey (*Brit. Birds* 88: 111) was what



Plate 85. Female Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* **missing foot and part of tarsus, Malta, July 1985** (*Joe Sultana*). This bird managed to raise her young, which eventually fledged successfully.

effect such bodily damage is having on the birds. Weights of such birds show that they are coping well, at least in feeding. It may be worth mentioning one instance when we located a female Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* with half of its tarsus missing (plate 85). She was incubating an egg, and raised the chick, which eventually fledged successfully.

Joe Sultana and John Borg
3 Sciberras Flats, Fleur-de-Lys Junction, B'Kara BKR 02, Malta

The subject of the observations by Keith Bowey regarding missing toes on European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* (*Brit. Birds* 88: 111) has been commented upon by several authors over the years. Meinertzhagen (1925) noted the toes or entire legs missing on 5% of Bulwer's Petrels *Bulweria bulwerii* examined on the Desertas and suggested that these were snapped off by predatory fish when the birds 'taxi' before taking off from the sea. Similarly, Love (1984) and Murray (1984) noted feet and legs missing on storm-petrels, suggesting that this was the result of diseases, with perhaps gulls or other seabirds snipping off bits of foot when at colonies. It is well known that Pike *Esox lucius* take the whole young of waterfowl, but snapping off legs or feet of full-grown birds would be a much tougher proposition for any fish except perhaps sharks.

At sites on the Firth of Clyde, the Clyde Ringing Group has tape-lured around 6,000 European Storm-petrels since 1978 and a small percentage, probably similar to that noted by Bowey, have had toes or legs missing. I have occasionally caught individuals showing signs of 'puffinosis', a debilitating and usually fatal disease which generally manifests itself in the feet of birds such that they swell and blister. Brooke (1990) has discussed this disease in relation to Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus*. My photograph (plate 86) shows the feet of a European Storm-petrel caught on Ailsa Craig, Strathclyde, in 1982 with one foot exhibiting puffinosis-like symptoms or some form of foot pox. When so diseased, the foot becomes scaly and brittle and probably would soon wither and drop off.



Plate 86. Feet of European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, that on right showing diseased condition (see text), Strathclyde, summer 1982 (*Bernard Zonfrillo*)

An alternative explanation may involve a parasitic marine trematode worm. These soft, ribbon-like, translucent worm larvae wrap themselves around the legs of small petrels while at sea. When the bird comes to land or is out of the water, the gelatinous trematode larvae dry up and shrink, forming a constriction above the toes. Imber (1984) has noted this on White-faced Storm-petrels *Pelagodroma marina*, with up to 800 larvae entangling one bird. I have also regularly found these fine anklets on European Storm-petrels, but usually in much smaller quantities. In time, accumulations of trematodes may form anklets which constrict the circulation and render the toes functionless, resulting in their eventual atrophy and loss.

These two explanations, rather than predators or nylon line, seem more plausible. Otherwise, there would be a much higher proportion of toeless or legless web-footed birds than has been noted.

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Orientation of Golden Eagle eyries: an interpretation

In their comprehensive account of nest-site selection by Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* (*Brit. Birds* 85: 469-481), Dr J. Watson and R. H. Dennis showed that the majority of nest sites in Scotland face between northwest and east. They concluded (a) that this is due to active choice by the eagles (85: 478), and (b) that the functional (survival) reason is to avoid excess exposure to sun (85: 479). The first conclusion is based on a comparison with the distribution of hill slopes, which show no directional bias. This comparison, however, is surely inappropriate: since almost all nests are on cliffs, it is their distribution that is relevant; indeed, for the common scarp-and-dipslope landform the predominant slope is quite misleading — on the Gargunnock Hills near Stirling, almost all crags face north whereas most slopes run southwards. There are strong geomorphological reasons for predicting that most crags face to the north, since this is where glacial erosion ended most recently and where the frost-shattering of rocks is most powerful. As no readily available catalogue exists of crags analysed by direction, I have gone through the climbing cliffs mentioned in the Scottish Mountaineering Club's guides for the Cairngorms and for the Central, Western and Northern Highlands and, wherever possible, located them on Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 or 1:25,000 maps and noted their main compass orientation (occasionally, there are several large and distinct faces on a hill and these have been noted separately); only a small proportion of crags were omitted, because they could not be located or their direction determined with assurance. The

results, using Watson & Dennis's nest data and direction conventions, are as follows:

	NW-N	N-NE	NE-E	E-SE	SE-S	S-SW	SW-W	W-NW	Total
Eyries	61	100	76	48	32	23	32	35	407
Crags	32	69	35	15	16	11	8	8	164

The orientation of eyries follows that of the crags very closely, and there are in fact slightly more eyries facing in southerly directions than expected; there is, however, no significant difference at all*. It is true that climbers' crags will tend to be at greater altitudes and less vegetated than those ideal for eagles, but I can see no reason why they should not be a good guide to the orientation of crags in general. On this analysis, there is no evidence to suppose that Golden Eagles use the general direction of a crag as a criterion for choosing a nest site. It is worth pointing out that the shelter afforded by a site is affected much more by details of vegetation and the surrounding rock formations than by its broad aspect, and a close study of these features and whether eaglets use them would be very valuable.

Watson & Dennis interpreted the 'northerly preference' of Scottish and southern European eagles in terms of avoiding exposure of nestlings to the sun and claimed that the southern-exposed nest sites in Scandinavia and at high altitudes in the Alps and the Pyrénées imply a reverse need to gain warmth. High-altitude nests, however, can be exposed to particularly intense radiation (at 2,000 m in Bavaria, surface temperatures in July have been measured as high as 80°C: R. G. Barry, *Mountain Weather and Climate*), and one could argue that a northeasterly aspect would be advantageous in catching the early-morning sun but avoiding that at midday. A more likely explanation, originally suggested to me by Professor David Bryant, is that Scandinavian and Alpine nests need to be on south-facing crags since these are free of snow and ice much earlier in the year (Barry notes that in Bavaria southerly slopes are snow-free a month earlier). *BWP* (vol. 2) suggests a laying-to-fledging period of 16 weeks, with several months' juvenile dependence: eggs are laid in mid May in the northern part of the range, which would take the rearing of young at least to early November; a month's extra delay would push this into winter. The 'northerly tendency' of southern European eagles may well reflect a true preference and also a means to escape high temperatures, and deserves further study. One should recall, however, that Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* nest in exposed sites not only in northern Europe and North America, but also as far south as the Red Sea and Florida. Maybe parental care can cope with extreme weather. For eagles elsewhere in Europe, there is no evidence that day-to-day weather factors are important: in Scotland there is no active choice of site with respect to aspect, while in other parts of northern Europe the 'southerly tendency' can be better explained in terms of earlier availability of sites in spring.

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*χ^2 = 7.02, 7 df, P Ω 0.47.

EDITORIAL COMMENT Jeff Watson & Roy Dennis have replied as follows: 'We cannot disagree with the logic behind Cliff Henty's reinterpretation of the analysis of Golden Eagle nest-site orientation. Our only worry is that he has used climbers' crags and these are usually much higher and larger than typical eagle crags. Indeed, such crags are, if anything, likely to be avoided by eagles if they are popular amongst climbers. We accept that the orientation of such crags may be broadly similar to that of the smaller eagle crags, although this remains to be demonstrated.

'In carrying out our analysis, we agonised at length over how to test for natural variation in aspect, and the method we used was the best we could come up with without going to the lengths of interpreting air photos or similar. The problem is that the majority of eagle crags are relatively small pieces of rock and are generally not individually identifiable on OS maps. To do a comprehensive test, it would be necessary to establish the characteristics of eagle crags based on a series of quantifiable measures and then to search a sample of areas completely, noting the distribution and aspect of those crags which meet the putative requirements for eagles, and then assess how such crags were distributed around the compass.

'There are two elements in this debate. Are eagles actively choosing nest sites with particular characteristics (this could be along aspect, altitude, degree of vegetation/wooded cover or other "variable") and thereby indicating a preference along that particular variable? This question, if appropriately framed and if adequate data are available, should be answerable. On the other hand, the *explanation* for any such apparent preference will probably always be open to interpretation, and for a bird such as the Golden Eagle the question would be unlikely to be amenable to experimentation.'

The Booth Museum, the Citril Finch, and the Red-billed Tropicbird

When I was a small boy, I was greatly impressed by the Booth Museum in Brighton, which included a splendid display of normal British birds in their natural haunts. When Richard Fairbank revealed that it is now under threat of closure (*Brit. Birds* 88: 244-245), I therefore took another look at it with a view to defending it, since E. T. Booth made the greatest of all the Victorian collections of mounted British birds, whose assembly is documented in his three-volume *Rough Notes* . . . (1881-87), and, other things being equal, it would be an important historic relic worthy of preservation at all costs. But other things are not equal. When I first saw the museum in the late 1930s, it included only Booth's trophies, arranged around the outside of a large hall, his collecting kit, and some subsequent rarities mainly from around Hastings acquired by the late Arthur Griffiths in a separate bank of cases in the centre. Since then, the collection has been rearranged to make room for other exhibitions, so it is a sad muddle, difficult to see properly, and its educational function has been replaced by colour photography. Surely it is now time to dismount all the interesting specimens and put them safely away to prevent any further fading?

It should be pointed out that it may be necessary to read between the lines when assessing these old collections. Thus, the first question that should have been asked about the Yarmouth Citril Finch *Serinus citrinella* (*Brit. Birds* 61: 92-

93; 87: 471-473) is why, when it was shown to J. H. Gurney Jr, he did not immediately secure it for the local collection that his family donated to Norwich Castle Museum, but apparently examined it only cursorily, and then allowed it to be sold to the most notoriously uncritical collector of all time: Sir Vauncey Harpur-Crewe, whose mere name should have been enough to discredit it instantly (consider the description of the sale of his collection in the introduction to Max Nicholson's *Birds in England*, 1926). Presumably, Gurney must have deduced that it was an escape, but wished not to spoil relations with an important source of information, the local bird-catchers, by discrediting their potentially lucrative trophy.

This contrasts greatly with the attitude of the banking Gurney family to the Malvern Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* (*Brit. Birds* 87: 480-487). J. H. Gurney Sr, who first investigated it, was an MP, founder-member of the BOU, and owner of the best collection of birds of prey in the World, and would have been well aware of the most likely source of a fraud (which has also not been mentioned), importation on an East Indiaman, which regularly called for fresh food and water at the breeding-places in the tropical Atlantic before the opening of the Suez Canal. His son, J. H. Gurney Jr, wrote *Early Annals of Ornithology* (1921), and was well aware of the possibility of fraud, as shown by his remarks in 1876 about a dubious bustard (*Zoologist* (2)11: 4763), and Dr A. G. Irwin (*in litt.*) informs me that he attached a similar comment to a Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* in the Norwich Museum. The Gurneys were the people best qualified to assess whether this specimen was a fraud, and they clearly thought that it was not one. Some half a dozen Herald Petrels *Pterodroma arminjoniana* and a Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*, which breed in the Atlantic only on Trindade Island off Brazil, have now been accepted for eastern North America, so why not a tropicbird from the South Atlantic?

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Whistling Oofoo terrorises Guatemalans

We were recently presented with a mini egg by one of our domestic chickens. The look of horror, nay terror, on the workers' faces was incredible. 'Destroy it quick!' 'Don't let it hatch!' 'A monster will come out of it!' These were the reactions (genuine fear) of two of our normally taciturn and unexcitable Guatemalan workers. We gave the egg to our dog to eat.

The myths surrounding such runt eggs mentioned by Dr H. Q. P. Crick (*Brit. Birds* 88: 169-180) are obviously not confined to English schoolboy egg-collectors.

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The Whistling Oofoo in Mauritius

Humphrey Crick's interesting paper on the Whistling Oofoo (Crick 1995) has prompted me to record that runt and yolkless eggs also occur on Mauritius. In a study of captive Pink Pigeons *Columba mayeri*, 41 out of 1,328 eggs (3.1%) were

runt (here defined as less than 75% of the mean weight of yolked eggs) and 43 were yolkless (of which 39 were also runt). Runt eggs have also been recorded in the wild Pink Pigeon population.

The Pink Pigeon is endemic to Mauritius. It has been rare for over a century and in 1975, following the passage of cyclone 'Gervaise', the population was estimated at only ten to 20 individuals. Only ten or fewer of these are thought to have contributed to the present population. In April 1995, there were 44 at the Government captive-breeding centre and a free-living population of 165 comprised mainly released individuals and their progeny.

Pink Pigeons lay white, sub-elliptical eggs in clutches of one or two. There were no significant differences between the weights of yolked eggs in one-egg and two-egg clutches, or between the first and second eggs in two-egg clutches. The average weight of 1,185 yolked eggs was 13.87 g (range 6.4-18.7 g.). There were no significant differences between the weights of eggs laid by captive and free-living birds.

In this study, 3.2% of the eggs laid by the captive birds were yolkless. These eggs were not laid randomly within the population. The 43 yolkless eggs were laid by 12 of 46 egg-laying females and accounted for 6.2% of their eggs; one female laid 11 (26.2%) of these. In 35 cases, the eggs were in single-egg clutches (i.e. 81.4% of clutches containing a yolkless egg). Only 23.5% of clutches of yolked eggs are of one egg. Yolkless eggs were all smaller than average and some were very small. They ranged in weight from 5.4 g to 13.3 g (38.9-95.9% of the weight of an average yolked egg). Four yolkless eggs were too large to be classed as runts, and, of the runts, two were yolked.

There were no significant age-related or seasonal trends in the percentage of yolkless eggs laid. With age, there is, however, an average decline in the weight of yolked eggs of 0.14 g per year*. Yolkless eggs are on average similar in shape to yolked eggs, but are much more variable, with higher percentages of both long and short sub-elliptical shapes*.

In this study, the rates of runt (3.1%) and yolkless eggs (3.2%) are higher than for any species recorded by Crick (1995) other than the Acorn Woodpecker *Melanerpes formicivorus*; for that species, 4.3% of the eggs were runts (Koenig 1980). Crick (1995) did not record any pigeons in his list, but I have also recorded runt yolkless eggs laid by domesticated Barbary Doves *Streptopelia risoria*, although the frequency was <0.5%. The reason why Pink Pigeons have laid so many runt eggs is unclear, but it could be the consequence of inbreeding depression.

I am grateful to Dr Humphrey Crick for discussions on runt eggs and for commenting upon this text. Sharon Wheeler helped organise and analyse the egg data, and the staff at the Government captive-breeding centre at Black River helped collect the data.

Carl G. Jones
Forestry Quarters, Black River, Mauritius, Indian Ocean

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*P <0.0001.

REVIEWS

Where to Watch Birds in Spain.

Edited by Eduardo de Juana.

Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, 1994. 546 pages; 15 black-and-white illustrations; 360 maps. ISBN 84-87334-14-8. Hardback £24.95.

At least 225 Spanish ornithologists collaborated in writing this Sociedad Española de Ornitología publication, which 'has been written with both Spanish birdwatchers and those who are visiting from other countries in mind.' They are all credited in the appropriate places in the text and can be justly proud of what they have achieved. This is a first-rate compilation which will be a standard work of its kind for years to come.

Lazy British non-linguists are bound to welcome the fact that the text is in English. It is divided into accounts for the 15 Autonomous Regions of mainland Spain (Andorra and Gibraltar are included, but the Balearic Islands are not) and a representative selection of 309 sites is described. Each regional account is prefaced by a concise description of the landscape and its birds (excellent summaries in their own right) and each site entry has a map, a main species list and good details of access, recommended routes and local accommodation.

It is hard to fault this book. My one criticism is that some of the curiously sepia-orange tinted maps are unclear and difficult to follow. But do not let this put you off. If you have an interest in Spain and its birds, buy this book. If you have never been there, I bet it will make you want to go.

Mike Everett

An Atlas of Seabird Distribution in North-west European Waters.

By the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

JNCC, Peterborough, 1995. 326 pages; 147 distribution maps. ISBN 1-873701-94-2. Paperback £28.00.

The internationally important populations of seabirds in northwestern Europe face many threats, primarily from pollution in various forms. Since the discovery of major oil potential in the North Sea in the late 1970s, nature conservationists have been gathering, analysing and publishing survey information to overcome the almost total lack of knowledge which existed then as to the distributions of seabirds away from the coasts.

This book provides the basic results of the 'Seabirds at Sea' project from 1979 to date, in the form of an atlas. It represents a remarkable partnership between conservationists, business (particularly oil, shipping and ferry companies) and Government.

For each of nearly 50 species, there are distribution maps for different periods of the year; a summary below each map; a general summary including conservation implications (which in most cases are the identification of specific areas at risk from oil pollution); a list of further reading material; and for most species a table to show density per square kilometre in each of ten areas surveyed.

This Atlas provides an unprecedented comprehensive and detailed illustration of the distribution of our seabirds, pinpointing the key conservation areas for a whole range of seabirds. As a conservation tool it will be invaluable.

Tony Marr

Kingfishers of the World.

By Leslie J. Knowles & James W. Nitchen.

Times Editions, Singapore, 1995. 200 pages; 90 colour illustrations. ISBN 981-204-470-1. £13.50.

Coming only three years after the excellent Fry, Fry & Harris treatment (1992, *Kingfishers, Bee-eaters and Rollers*, reviewed *Brit. Birds* 85: 572), this volume was always going to be an also-ran. It is not a book for the serious bird-watcher—in fact, I am not sure where it is aimed.

The text is concise, most species getting in

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effect a double-page spread into which is incorporated a single colour illustration of the species. The text is broken down into location, habitat, description, food, voice, nest and a brief note on subspecies (which are not illustrated). Some of the English names differ from those in Fry *et al.*, making comparison wearisome.

The illustrations are this book's weakest point, some apparently having been painted with little or no knowledge of bird topography. Alan Harris need not, on this evidence, be looking over his shoulder! Even at £13.50, I recommend saving up the extra £14.49 and buying the Christopher Helm book.

DAVE NURNEY

Atlante degli Uccelli Nidificanti in Italia.

By Enrico Meschini & Sergio Frugis.

Istituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvetica, Ozzano dell'Emilia, Italy, 1993. 345 pages; 241 distribution maps. ISSN 1121-3973.

This book, *The Breeding Bird Atlas of Italy*, portrays the results of a quite remarkable achievement, regarded as surprising even by Italian ornithologists. As it states in the English summary: 'The reaction of Italian ornithologists has gone beyond our expectations: a total of 946 participants provided . . . a total of over 300,000 records.'

The atlas survey was carried out during the four years 1983-86, using 20×20-km squares, which total 941 sampling units. The uneven distribution of observers, however, necessitated the use of travelling professional ornithological surveyors, particularly in the southern one-third of mainland Italy.

The categories of breeding evidence used in the survey were based on those recommended by the former European Ornithological Atlas Committee, but slightly simplified, and the maps show possible, probable and confirmed breeding with the now-standard three sizes of dot (in red, with a black coastal outline). These are displayed, one per page, with about one-third of a page of interpretive text, wholly in Italian. The maps themselves, however, along with the associated statistics, provide fascinating browsing: the first time ever that the precise distribution of breeding birds has been available for this important part of Europe. There is a helpful one-page summary in English. A total of 240 species was confirmed breeding, with an average of 73 species per 20×20-km square.

Although not part of the atlas project itself, there is also a five-page table giving population estimates for each species for 1983-86 (and for 1983-90 whenever a significant change is known to have taken place). Totals such as 2,000-6,000 Wallcreepers *Tichodroma muraria* and comparisons such as 500-1,000 Red-billed Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* and 5,000-10,000 Yellow-billed Choughs *P. graculus* add interest when looking at the distribution maps, but it is the fine detail on the latter which is of most value. The central ridge of the Apennines shows either as a gap in distribution (e.g. Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*) or as the core of the distribution (e.g. Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*), and it is interesting for us in the extreme west of Europe, where it is a mainly lowland species, to discover, for example, that Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis* is a montane bird in Italy (mainly 600-2,450 m above sea level).

The achievements by close on 1,000 Italian birdwatchers will form a solid base on which Italian ornithology can now build with great satisfaction and pride.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Where to Watch Birds in Africa.

By Nigel Wheatley.

Christopher Helm/A & C Black, London, 1995. 432 pages; 102 maps; 51 black-and-white illustrations. ISBN 0-7136-4013-8. Hardback £14.99.

The author, who also wrote *Where to Watch Birds in South America*, acknowledges that only the great increase in birding, and availability of detailed trip reports, allows such compilations. Even then, any guide to such a huge area must be highly selective; thus, for a country as rich in birds as Kenya, only 13 localities are listed, compared with 111 in Moore's *Where to Watch Birds in Kenya* (1984). Most countries are discussed, though, 16 of them with more than six sites. At best, this is an overview, but there are some serious drawbacks on the ornithological side. This stems partly from the author's decision to follow Clements's

Checklist of Birds of the World, where many of the English names differ from those in existing bird guides, and many forms generally recognised as subspecies are elevated to full species, with names which are meaningless unless you have 'Clements' to hand. This problem is exacerbated by the total lack of scientific names, apart from a list for southern African species. The splitting tendency will mislead observers as to what endemics they can expect. For Ethiopia, for instance, four endemics are included which are considered by most authorities to be subspecies, but two good endemics (Yellow-throated Seed-eater *Serinus flavigula* and Salvadori's Seed-eater *S. xantholaema*) are omitted. Some useful travelling tips are given, such as how to avoid certain hazards, though perhaps it should have been noted that the number of uncharted land-mines in Angola exceeds that country's human population. Users of this book will need to research many aspects of their trip much more widely before they go birding in Africa.

Martin Woodcock

Andorra Oeells/Oiseaux/Aves/Birds. Compiled by Jaequeline Crozier, Marie Jo Dubourg-Savage & Alex Clamens. (Associació per a la Defensa de la Natura, Andorra, 1995. 276 pages. ISBN 99920-1-117-3. Paperback £16.95) An introduction to the birds of Andorra, with colour photographs of each species and short texts in Catalan, French, Spanish and English. Although small (the Principality of Andorra is 468 km^2), there is a wide range of habitats, since altitude varies from 840 m to 2,942 m. Accounts of the typical birds of each habitat and of each month augment the species texts: useful for visiting birders and to convert even more Andorrans to sympathy with wildlife.

JTRS

A Photographie Guide to Birds of Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore. By G. W. H. Davison & Chew Yen Fook. (New Holland, London, 1995. 144 pages. ISBN 1-85368-513-5. Paperback £7.99) Pocket-sized field guide with over 250 wonderful reference photographs (amazingly, all but nine taken by Chew Yen Fook). Design and layout are good, with bird images of an appropriate size, and just enough surrounding vegetation to indicate habitat. The short texts are helpful, with call, jizz and so on described, as well as the obvious field marks. A field guide illustrated by artwork can show the full range of age and sex plumage differences and views from different angles, but this is a very superior photographic reference guide.

JTRS

Climate Change and Rare Speeies in Britain. Edited by G. W. Elmes & A. Free. (ITE Research Publication No. 8. HMSO, London, 1994. 28 pages. ISBN 0-11-701802-3. Paperback £6.00) This thought-provoking booklet reports on analyses of a range of future climatic scenarios on rare plants, insects and breeding birds in Britain. Bird data were obtained from the annual reports of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. Conclusions are inevitably variable, but, on the whole, general warming combined with higher rainfall would benefit some species, whereas up to half our rare breeding species might suffer if summer droughts were combined with cold wet winters.

MAO

Larousse Pocket Guide: birds of Britain and Ireland. By John Gooders. (Larousse, London, 1995. 256 pages. ISBN 0-7523-0016-4. Paperback £5.99) With this true *field* guide, beginners can leave physically larger guides covering more species in the car or on the bookshelf. Errors, such as the duplication of two species in the Checklist and, worse, the claim that 250 species are included (actually 234), are outweighed by the excellent illustrations by Norman Arlott and Alan Harris and the informative and surprisingly full text. This colourful, pocket-sized field guide, complete with short introduction and distribution maps, comes at a pocket-friendly price.

Peter Lansdown

Birds of Miehigan. By James Granlund, Raymond J. Adams, Charles Nelson, Stephen Allen, Philip C. Chu, Michael Keilb, Gail A. McPeek, Jaek Reinoehl, Richard Sehinkel & Andrea Trautman. (University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1994. 358 pages. ISBN 0-253-30122-X. £55.00) The format is of a coffee-table book but the text is detailed and informative and covers current status (up to 1993), distribution, history, habitat, seasonal occurrence and breeding and wintering ranges. Regular breeding species are illustrated by full-page colour paintings by five different artists.

Séan McMinn

Artists for Nature in Extremadura. Edited by Nicholas Hammond. (The Wildlife Art Gallery, Lavenham, 1995. 192 pages. ISBN 0-9526236-0-9. £30.00) Some 50,000 Common Cranes *Grus grus* winter in the forest-pastures of Extremadura in southwest Spain, an 'ecological jewel' now threatened by agricultural intensification. A team of 58 artists from 17 countries has applied its combined talents to document the cranes' journey across Europe and to portray the wildlife, landscape and way of life of the people of Extremadura. A veritable feast for the eyes, this wonderful book should stir up considerable interest and concern for this important region. Thoroughly recommended.
Hilary Burn

The Birds of Kentucky. By Burt L. Monroe. (Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1994. 145 pages. ISBN 0-253-33892-1. £45.00) This large-format avifauna is the first for the state of Kentucky. After a brief introduction (only five pages), the bulk of the book is devoted to the species accounts, which detail the natural history and status of every species. A useful occurrence and abundance chart provides a quick reference to seasonal status. There are 49 meticulous paintings by William Zimmerman, only two of which were specifically painted for this book.
Nigel Redman

The Birds of Prey in Japan. By Teruaki Morioka. (Birder, Tokyo, 1995. 632 pages. ISBN 4-8299-3035-7. Price not stated) This book covers Japan's 30 species of raptor, including occasional visitors. The text is in Japanese, with an English summary for each species. Distributions are clearly mapped, for both Japan and the entire World range. For non-Japanese-speakers, it will be most useful for its comprehensive series of photographs depicting each species in its range of plumages, both perched and in flight; for many species, these are the best that I have seen. A bit heavy for the field, though, being about the size of a volume of *BWP*.
Richard Porter

Ireland's Bird Life: a world of beauty. Edited by Matt Murphy & Susan Murphy. Photographs by Richard Mills. Text by Richard Lansdown. (Sherkin Island Marine Station, Co. Cork, 1994. 160 pages. ISBN 1-870492-80-3. £16.99) This book is a vehicle for the publication of a large selection of Richard T. Mills' photographs. As a past winner of Bird Photograph of the Year (1981), quality and aesthetic design are ensured; as a professional Press photographer with *The Cork Examiner*, exciting, 'newsworthy' images are to be expected. My own favourites include conversing Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, a tree-top colony of Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* at sunset, silhouetted Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* following a tractor and disc-harrow, and a Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* collecting tufts of hair from a horse's tail.
JTRS

Birds of Malawi: a supplement to Newman's Birds of Southern Africa. By Kenneth Newman, Nigel Johnston-Stewart & Bob Medland. (Southern Book Publishers, Cape Town, 1992. 110 pages. ISBN 1-86812418-5. Paperback £9.95) This 110-page book is a supplement to *Newman's Birds of Southern Africa* and can be used in conjunction with it. Of the 74 species illustrated, 70 had not been illustrated in recent South African field guides, although seven have since appeared in Sinclair's *Birds of Southern Africa*. The annotated checklist is particularly useful, giving the status of each species and where they can be found. Also, each species is cross-referenced with the page number of the relevant illustration in *Newman's Birds of Southern Africa*. A very useful supplement.
Séan McMinn

The Birdwatcher's Yearbook and Diary 1996. Edited by John E. Pemberton. (Buckingham Press, Maids Moreton, 1995. 320 pages. ISBN 0-9514965-6-5. Paperback £12.50) A good indication of the indispensability of this 16th annual volume is the fact that it is almost always referred to simply as *BYB*. Every birder will find something of use: tide-tables, sunrise and sunset times, a host of useful names, addresses and phone numbers, and much more besides. In addition to all the usual reference sections, 11 feature articles include 'Birding on the Internet' and 'Life after Birds of the Western Palearctic' (or should that be *BWP*?).
Ian Dawson

Moroccan Bird Songs and Calls. By Mats Stromberg. (Mats Stromberg, Karlstad, 1995. Cassette, 76 species announced. £11.00) The range of species covered is

impressive, even though Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*, White-crowned Black Wheatear *O. leucopyga* and some other pertinent species are absent. The recordings average 66 seconds in length and, for 30 of the 76 species, include both song and call. Though quiet, occasionally too quiet, compared with the English announcements, the recordings are generally clear of intrusive background noise. Complete with accompanying 18-page booklet, this cassette will enhance any birding trip to northwest Africa.
Peter Lansdown

Birds of North America. By Peter Thayer. (Windows 3.1, CD-ROM. Thayer Birding Software, Milford, USA, 1995. Over 1,000 colour photographs with 550 songs. $65; postage $5 US/Canada, $10 overseas) There are 895 species listed in this 'first computerised North American field guide', but I was disappointed: numerous species had no photographs and those included are extremely variable in quality, with some distant or partially obscured by foliage, but others good. The rare (or extinct) Bachman's Warbler *Vermivora bachmani* is included, but some common species are not illustrated; most gulls are shown only in adult breeding plumage, but for Little Gull *Larus minutus* and Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* the photographs are only of first-winters: confusing for the beginner. There is much room for improvement on this first and expensive production, but I have no doubt that it will come. So wait.
Séan McMinn

The Pocket Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe. By Martin Walters. Illustrations by nine artists. (Dragon's World, London, 1995. 160 pages. ISBN 1-85028-363-X. Paperback £7.95) Two species per page; 286 species, each illustrated by a single painting of an adult male in breeding plumage (but two Carrion Crows *Corvus corone corone* are shown!): aimed at the beginner, but totally inadequate for identification purposes.
JTRS

ALSO RECEIVED

Lories and Lorikeets: the brush-tongued parrots and their care in aviculture. By Alison Ruggles. (Blandford Press, London, 1995. 176 pages. ISBN 0-7137-2268-1. £25.00)

Owls. By John Sparks & Tony Soper. 2nd edn [paperback reprint] (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1995. 240 pages. ISBN 0-7153-0423-2. Paperback £12.99)



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Exclusive reduced-price offers

It is worthwhile scanning the British BirdShop pages every month because there are always new special reduced-price book offers available for *BB* subscribers. All books are sent POST FREE anywhere in the World.

This month, British BirdShop is on pages v & vi, in the centre of this issue.

Investment Fund

We have established an investment fund to help to support *British Birds* in the coming years. As a non-profit-making journal, *BB* relies on subscription income, donations and sponsorship. All income is devoted to publishing *BB*, for the benefit of ornithology.

May we suggest to any long-standing, loyal subscribers the possibility of remembering *British Birds* in your wills? We want to see *BB* continuing to thrive into the twenty-first century.

NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson
Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Progress in Russia

The Russian Bird Conservation Union, founded in 1993, already has 450 individual members and 14 branches—all, so far, in European Russia (although 'Europe', ornithologically speaking, is being pushed east to the River Yenisey). The RBCU is a Partner Designate of BirdLife International, and has received generous support from the Dutch bird protection society Vogelbescherming Nederland.

The focus of its early work will be the listing of Important Bird Areas in Russia. In addition, it is participating with the RSPB in a survey of Corn Crakes *Crex crex* and the search for the breeding area of the Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*. There will also be surveys of the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*, Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, and the wild-bird trade in Russia.

The RBCU's Development Officer, Dr Elena Lebedeva, speaks excellent English, and the RBCU office is at Kilbachicha Street 6, Building 5, Room 110, Moscow 129278; tel./fax 7 095 283 12 02. (*Contributed by Geoff Harper*)

Birdwatchers' Weekend 1995

The annual ornithological diary contains a mass of dates, and it is impossible to keep them all. Scattered amongst them, however, are just a few that should not be missed. We suspect that a large section of the birding community does not realise that the annual BTO conference at Swanwick is one of these. During 8th-10th December 1995, the traditional, but none-the-less exciting gathering indulged in an orgy of ornithological debate, argument and surprise. There was no clear theme this year, but topics embraced farming, building developments and gardens.

Highlights included Dr Adam Watson's Witherby Memorial Lecture, Mary Waller serving lunch, the results from some BTO work on organic farming, Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis* and Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos*, a fully bearded Chris Mead, the Alan Knox grizzly quiz, and the *Subbuteo* bookshop with the temptation to spend! spend! spend!

Presentations included the Bernard Tucker Medal to Brian Little and the Jubilee Medal to Ann & Joe Hardman; the *BB*-sponsored Young Ornithologists of the Year Awards; and the *BB* mystery photograph competition prize (Australian bubbly), won by David Jardine in a draw, after having tied with Tom Cadwallender, Norman Elkins and Alan Martin.

In 1996, this event will take place during the weekend of 6th-8th December. Enter it in your diary now!

Human mimicry of bird sounds

To gales of laughter, under the title 'Answering Calls of Nature', Jeffery Boswall gave an updated version of his lecture on human imitation of bird sounds at the BTO's Annual Birdwatchers' Weekend on 8th December 1995. He would be glad to hear from any other ornithologists interested in this topic (see Campbell & Lack's *A Dictionary of Birds*, 1985, p. 293, for a summary), to learn of new examples from any part of the World and to acquire additional instruments (blowers, suckers, twisters, scrapers, bubblers, etc.) for his collection, which is already bequeathed to an appropriate museum. Jeffery's address is Birdswell, Wraxall, Bristol, Avon BS9 1JZ. Bona fide enquirers who send a 32 cm × 23 cm envelope and a 43p stamp will receive a photocopy of a pair of relevant papers from *Recorded Sound* (83: 57-73, 73-100).

Lancaster Atlas

The Lancaster BWS has, since 1959, covered the bird-rich area of North Lancashire and adjoining parts of Cumbria. The Society's latest publication is an *Atlas of Breeding Birds of Lancaster and District*. This covers, on a tetrad basis, the nine 10-km squares centred on Lancaster. There is a wide range of habitats within the area, from the coastal saltmarshes to the reed swamp at Leighton Moss, the still mainly natural river Lune with an extensive flood plain (and sandy banks, in which almost 2,000 Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* nest holes were counted in 1993) and the moors and uplands of the northern Pennines. So, it is perhaps no surprise that a total of 141 species was recorded. Some national declines are mirrored within the area, notably Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* and Barn Owl *Tyto alba*. But field-breeding waders, such as Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, seem to have bucked the national downward spiral. Recent colonists have included Siskin *Carduelis spinus*, European Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*, Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* and Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, the last two at the reedbed outpost of Leighton Moss RSPB reserve.

The Lancaster area must be one of the best documented in Britain. Copies of the *Atlas* are available at £8 (incl. p&p) from Dr R. Griffiths, 41 The Row, Silverdale, Carnforth, Lancashire LA5 0UG. (*Contributed by John Wilson*)

Bumper Devon Report

The latest (1994) *Devon Bird Report* is a massive 120 pages in length, partly as a result of a doubling of submitted records in the last four years (from 15,000 in 1991 to 32,000 in 1994). Despite this, publication was again achieved by the end of the following year. The 80-page systematic list includes decorative drawings, and there is a scattering of evocative documentary illustrations of Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* by P. A. Dennis, and Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* and Pallas's Leaf Warbler *P. proregulus* by M. Langman.

The membership secretary of the Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society is David Jenks, 27 Froude Avenue, Watcombe Park, Torquay TQ2 8NS.

Hong Kong's latest

The thumping 228-page *Hong Kong Bird Report* for 1994 includes the usual mouth-watering systematic list and reports on waterfowl (including wader) counts, which reached a new high of 59,692 for the Deep Bay area in January. Birds new to Hong Kong were Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus*, Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola*, Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* and Yellow-streaked Warbler *Phylloscopus armandii*.

Perhaps of most interest, however, to those who have been confused by them, will be the paper on the identification and systematics of large white-headed gulls in Hong Kong by Peter R. Kennerley, W. (Ted) Hoogendoorn and Michael L. Chalmers. They conclude that seven forms occur, one of which is still to be identified, the commonest being *Larus heuglini taimyrensis* (formerly misidentified as *L. argentatus mongolicus*) and *L. vegae birulai* (previously thought to be *L. a. vegae*). Four of the other five, rarer forms are now considered to be *L. h. heuglini*, *L. v. vegae*, *L. cachinnans mongolicus* and *L. a. smithsonianus*.

Copies of the *Report* may be obtained (price £12.50 incl. p&p; £1.00 extra to Europe) from HK Bird Watching Society, 12 Denman's Close, Lindfield, West Sussex RH16 2JX.

New to Norfolk, maybe

With acknowledgment to Chandler S. Robbins' predictions of future Nearctic vagrants to Europe (*Brit. Birds* 73: 448-57), Steve Baker has done the same for the county of Norfolk. From a shortlist of 53 species, his personal predictions are Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* and Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*.

The latest *Norfolk Bird Club Bulletin* (no. 17) also includes Peter Allard's memories of September 1965—back in the days when there were 'no birdlines to phone, no pagers, mobile phones etc . . . the only magazine was "British Birds" and it was simply a totally different scene than today'—when, on the morning of 4th September, Yarmouth Cemeteries held some 1,000 Common Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, 600 Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca*, 200 Northern Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* and some 200 other night-migrants. Membership of the Norfolk Bird Club is £8.50: write to NBC, The Old Bakery, High Street, Docking, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE31 8NH.

The Carl Zeiss Award

Anyone whose photograph of a rarity is submitted to assist with a record assessment by the British Birds Rarities Committee is automatically eligible to win the annual prize of *Carl Zeiss* binoculars (choice of 10×40, 7×42 or 'Night Owl' 7×45).

The runners-up, and everyone whose rarity photographs are published in *British Birds* with the annual 'Report on rare birds', are also presented by Carl Zeiss Ltd with free 6-month subscriptions to *BB*.

So, it is worthwhile sending in your prints or transparencies!

Last year's winner, for in-the-hand photographs of the Holme Pierrepont Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (*Brit. Birds* 88: 427-428, plates 121 & 122), was J. Szczur, who was presented with his *Zeiss* 7 × 42s at the Carl Zeiss stand at the British Birdwatching Fair (plate 87).



Plate 87. The Carl Zeiss Award. The 1995 winner, J. Szczur (right), receiving his prize from British Birds Rarities Committee Chairman, Rob Hume, August 1995 (*EMAP*).

'Birdlife of a Fenland Parish'

This 76-page local-report-style publication from the Haddenham Conservation Society is an account of the birds of this 15-km^2 Cambridgeshire parish, which lies 8 km south-west of Ely. Its example could usefully be followed throughout Britain, for the existence of such a booklet is bound to increase the interest in the birds, the other wildlife and conservation in general in the local community.

Today's avifauna is contrasted with that in the time before the 'expanse of meres, little islands, soggy marsh and scrubby sedge and phragmite reed beds' became intensively farmed arable fields and the 'avian inhabitants of marsh and reedy fens' included 'booming Bitterns . . . Purple Heron, Night Heron, maybe Little Bittern and even [White] Stork' and 'birds on the menu of feasts held at weddings and the like' included 'Cranes, Herons, Curlews, Mallards, Teals, Plovers, Swans, Larks, Bitterns, Stints and Godwits.' Those were the days!

The Birds of Haddenham, edited by Jake Allsop, and researched and written by James Cater and Paul Mason, costs £3.00 (plus 50p p&p) from Wendy Lanman, 1 The Pond, Station Road, Haddenham, Cambridgeshire CB6 3XD.

New for the Western Palearctic?

The story goes as follows. Your compiler (BS) and his wife had just arrived in Agadir, Morocco, for a week's birding. We had checked in at the hotel, and the suitcases were being unlocked, when wife, who had walked onto the balcony, reported a glossy-starling calling from a nearby tree. Wishing to show excessive ornithological knowledge of Morocco, the response while struggling with the suitcase straps was 'Nonsense! Glossy-starlings are sub-Saharan, they do not occur in Morocco. All starlings here are Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor*.' 'You had better come and look through these binoculars then!' And there, sitting and whistling on a nearby tree, was what was later identified as a Purple Glossy-Starling *Lamprotornis purpureus*, complete with massive bright orange eye. Now, if it jumped ship from Dakar to Agadir, rather than escaping from an aviary in Agadir itself . . . Hope springs eternal!

British Birdwatching Fair

The BBWF's telephone number has changed to 01572 771079; its fax number remains 01572 756611.

If you are not already 'a regular', take our advice and go to the Fair at Rutland Water during 16th-18th August 1996.

Please contribute

News items—ranging from major world, national or local ornithological or conservation events to personal news of well-known individual birders or even humorous snippets—will be greatly welcomed by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott for possible inclusion in this monthly feature.

Please send notes on anything which has interested you to 'News and comment', British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, or contact your Regional News Team member (see box on right).

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—*Northern Ireland*
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Don Taylor—*Southeast*
Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*
John Wilson—*Northwest*



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 12th February to 17th March 1996. These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Staithes Harbour (North Yorkshire), 14th February; River Witham, Tattershall Bridge (Lincolnshire), 29th February to 2nd March, when entangled with angler's hook, taken into care, but later died; two in Gruinard Bay (Highland) on 14th March and single there on 17th March.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* At least 25 in southern Ireland since January, nine of which were on 24th-25th February (four in Co. Kerry, three in Co. Cork and two in Co. Dublin).

Redhead *Aythya americana* Bleasby (Nottinghamshire), 9th-17th March (potential first for Britain & Ireland).

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* Musselburgh (Lothian), 25th February.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Sunderland (Tyne & Wear), 19th February to 11th March.

Iceland Gull *L. glaucoides* Third-winter of the race *kumlieni* at Timon (Co. Donegal), 22nd February; adult of that race at Killybegs (Co. Donegal) on 8th March (where there was also 13 Iceland, four Glaucous *L. hyperboreus* and two Mediterranean Gulls *L. melanocephalus*).

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* River Lynher (Cornwall), 27th-28th February; Plymouth (Devon), 13th-14th March; Plym Estuary (Devon), 17th March.

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* Nottingham (Nottinghamshire), 20th February to 16th March (potential first record of genuine vagrant for Britain & Ireland).

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* Holkham Park (Norfolk), 13th-16th March; long-stayer (*Brit. Birds* 89: 156) present at Werrington, Peterborough (Cambridgeshire), to 14th March.

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39. Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum*



Plate 88. Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum*, **Russia, January 1988** (*Alexey V. Ivanov*). Formerly considered rare in the Moscow Region, but now shown, by organised census counts, to be quite common (see pp. 171-174).

MONTHLY MARATHON

The gull in plate 1 was named by competitors as Bonaparte's *Larus philadelphia* (79%), Black-headed *L. ridibundus* (9%), Ross's *Rhodostethia rosea* (5%), Little *L. minutus* (4%), Laughing *L. atricilla* (3%) and Grey-headed *L. cirrocephalus* (less than 1%). It was indeed Bonaparte's, photographed in California, USA, in April 1992 by Dr R. J. Chandler.

The field is now strung out, with an Irishman and a Brit—Anthony McGeehan (Co. Down) and Jon Holt (Buckinghamshire)—on five-in-a-row sequences, three Finns—Dick Forsman, Hannu Jännes and Heikki Vasamies—each on four in a row, a second Brit—M. J. Tarrant (Lincolnshire)—on three in a row, and the rest of the field on just one right answer (or, a few, back at the start on zero).

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Plate 89. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 118: eighth stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. *Read the rules on page 24 of the January issue*, then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th May 1996.

Recent reports This month's news is on page 200.

[*Brit. Birds* 89: 202, April 1996] © British Birds Ltd 1996

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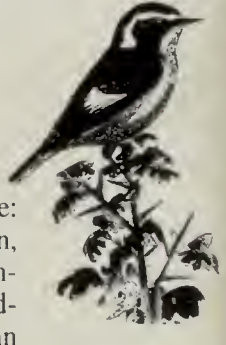
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Moroccan Bird Songs and Calls



Among species on the tape: Double-spurred Francolin, Barbary Partridge, Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Red-necked Nightjar, Egyptian Nightjar, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Levaillant's Green Woodpecker, Dupont's Lark, Thick-billed Lark, Temminck's Horned Lark, Tekla Lark, Moussier's Redstart, Red-rumped Wheatear, Black Wheatear, Scrub, Warbler, Tristram's Warbler, Desert Warbler, Blackheaded Bush Shrike, Desert Sparrow and House Bunting. The tape includes 76 of the most interesting species occuring in Morocco. Total running-time: 90 minutes. Explanatory booklet in English included.

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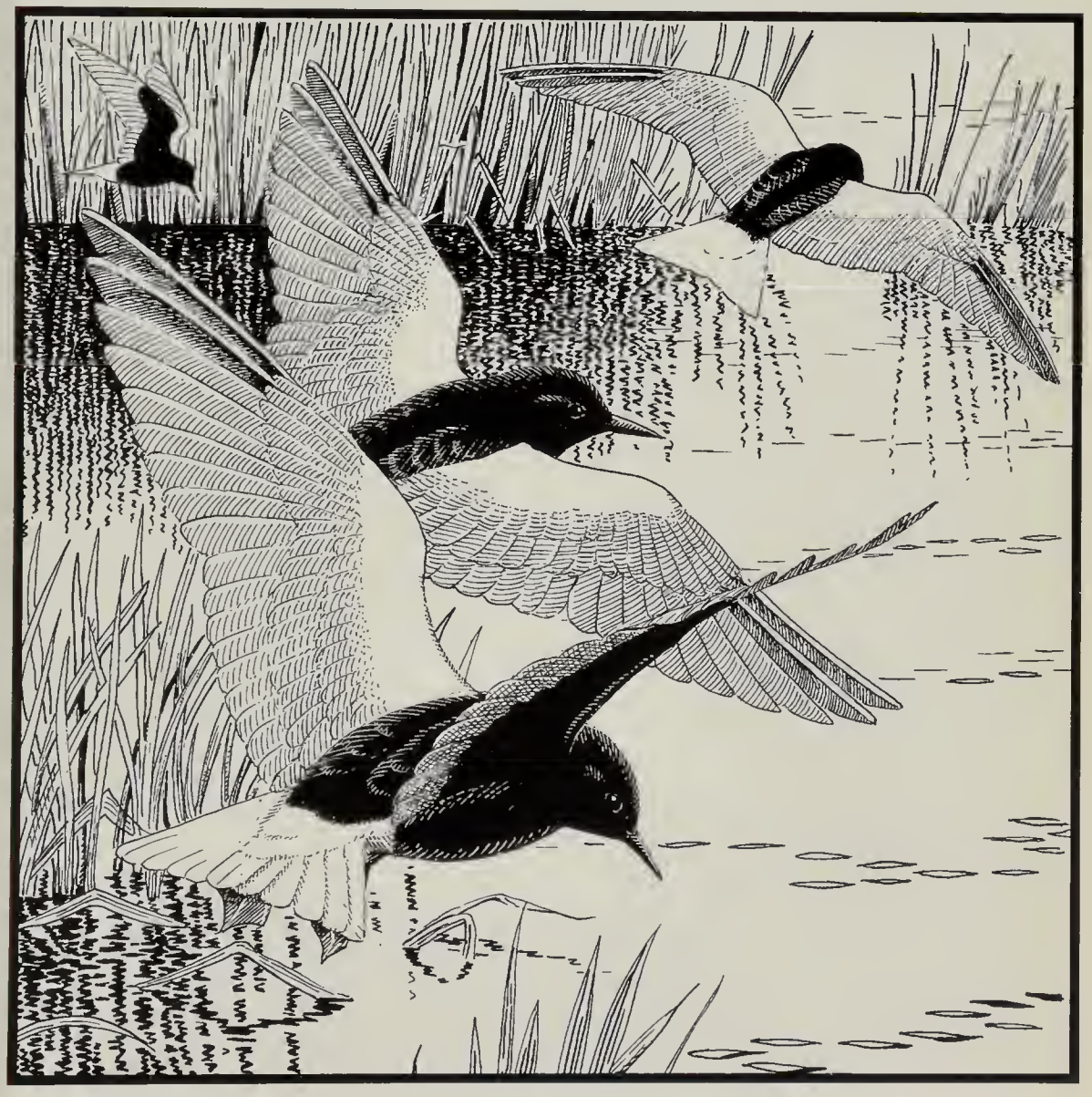
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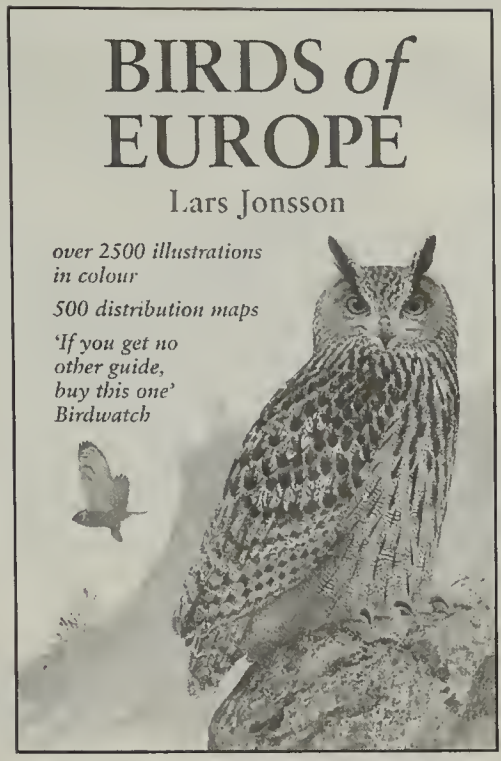
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The Dartford Warbler in the United Kingdom in 1994

David W. Gibbons and Simon Wotton

ABSTRACT A survey of breeding Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* in the UK in 1994 recorded a total of 1,600-1,670 territories, though it is likely that the actual population was slightly higher (1,800-1,890 territories). This represents a near four-fold increase in population since an earlier survey in 1984. Although recorded in nine counties, more than three-quarters of the population was restricted to two (Dorset and Hampshire), with most of the rest in Devon and Surrey. The most likely cause of the population increase is the recent run of mild winters, though habitat change may have played a part. Despite such a marked increase in numbers, the species' range is still much reduced compared with that of earlier centuries, and 75% of its current population is still restricted to only 24 sites.

In the United Kingdom, Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* are confined largely to the remaining fragments of lowland heathland and, as a consequence of the interest in the flora and fauna of this much-threatened habitat, their populations and ecology have been well studied (Tubbs 1963, 1967; Bibby & Tubbs 1975; Bibby 1979a & b; Robins & Bibby 1985a; Westerhoff & Tubbs 1991; Catchpole & Phillips 1992). Historically, the Dartford Warbler had a much wider distribution, and was presumably more abundant, than in recent years. In the nineteenth century, its breeding range extended from Suffolk in the east to Cornwall in the

west, and northwards to Shropshire and possibly even Staffordshire. During that century, however, its population went into steep decline (Alexander & Lack 1944; Parslow 1973) and by the middle of the twentieth century it had become largely restricted to the counties of Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex and the Isle of Wight. Though the precise cause of this decline is uncertain, at least part of the species' demise was probably due to habitat loss and fragmentation (Tubbs 1963; Sharrock 1976), with the United Kingdom having lost over 70% of its lowland heathland since the early 1800s (Farrell 1989). Much of this loss was as a consequence of reclamation for agriculture and forestry, and urban and industrial development. Though such losses have now largely ceased as a result of improved site protection, the remaining areas are still vulnerable to degradation through scrub encroachment, particularly by birch *Betula* and Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*, following the demise of traditional methods of pastoral land management (Tubbs 1963; Webb & Haskins 1980).

Though Alexander & Lack (1944) considered that egg-collection may have played a part in the historical contraction of range of this species, more noticeable have been the periodic population crashes due to severe winter weather. An estimated national population of 460 pairs in 1960-61 was reduced to no more than a dozen pairs in 1963 as a result of the two harsh winters of 1961/62 and 1962/63 (Tubbs 1963, 1967). Since 1850, similar population crashes are thought to have occurred during the winters of 1860/61, 1880/81, 1886/87, 1916/17, the late 1930s/early 1940s and 1946/47 (Tubbs 1963). Dartford Warblers have a comparatively high nesting success, with about 80% of nests producing some young, and early-starting pairs can rear two broods in a good summer (Bibby 1979a); thus, breeding populations can build up again swiftly following such crashes. Despite this, however, as the species is a year-round resident at the northern limit of its World breeding range (Tucker & Heath 1994), it is highly likely that it will always suffer from harsh winter weather.

The UK population, all of which is in England, has been well monitored, with annual population figures published in county bird reports and, since 1974, in the reports of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. By 1993, the population in the UK was estimated at just over 1,150 pairs (Ogilvie *et al.* 1996). Tubbs (1963, 1967) collated the county-bird-report data for the early 1960s, and national surveys were undertaken in 1974 (Bibby & Tubbs 1975) and 1984 (Robins & Bibby 1985a), and the third in this series was organised by the RSPB and English Nature in 1994. This paper reports the results of this most recent survey.

Though the population of Dartford Warblers in the UK is small compared with that in southern and western France and Spain, the species is considered to be of conservation concern in Europe because of losses in some of the most valuable habitats in Spain, including the Mediterranean maquis (de Juana *et al.* 1988; Tucker & Heath 1994).

Methods

Sites covered

Since the Dartford Warbler is restricted largely to lowland heathland, the distribution of which is reasonably well known, the 1994 survey was, as for the earlier ones, based largely on visits to all possible sites. A full list of such sites for the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex,

Berkshire and the Isle of Wight was compiled from the reports of the two earlier national surveys (Robins & Bibby 1985b), from the RSPB/EN Heathland Inventory (Evans *et al.* 1994) and from local knowledge. Dartford Warblers have been recorded from some areas, for example the Purbeck Ridge, which are not considered lowland heath, so all additional non-heathland sites from which Dartford Warblers have been recorded were included in the survey. Because 'sites' in the New Forest, Hampshire, are rather ill-defined, the survey there was based on visits to all 1-km squares within the Forest's boundary, rather than to individual sites. Though the Dartford Warbler breeds in the Channel Islands, this survey did not cover those islands.

The definition of what constituted a site was largely arbitrary. We have generally treated each distinct fragment of habitat which could be referred to by a particular name as a site, as this was the approach used in the earlier surveys (Robins & Bibby 1985b). In some cases, these individual sites are themselves simply a small part of a larger 'site', for example a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). We chose not to use such larger sites as our sampling unit for two reasons. First, fieldworkers may well have been unaware of the boundary of such sites. Secondly, whilst it would be straightforward to calculate the total number of Dartford Warbler territories on a particular SSSI by adding up the counts for each of its constituent fragments, it would have been much more difficult to do the reverse if the data had been collected simply in terms of the number of territories per SSSI.

One of the disadvantages of using sites rather than grid squares for survey purposes is that many sites have the same name. For instance, there are at least four lowland-heathland sites known as Pirbright, and different observers use the same name to refer to different sites or similar sites with different boundaries, which makes comparisons between surveys difficult. It is sites, however, not grid squares, that are protected for their nature-conservation interests and this is essentially the rationale behind collecting the data on a site-by-site basis.

Organisation

Much of the fieldwork was undertaken by volunteer ornithologists working through county or regional co-ordinators to a national organiser (SW). In addition, substantial amounts of fieldwork were undertaken by staff from the RSPB and EN.

Field methods

Observers were asked to visit each site (or 1-km square in the New Forest) at least twice, once during April to mid May, and once during mid May to the end of June. They were asked to record the number of singing males and other contacts (for example, calling individuals and adults carrying nesting material or food) separately, to estimate the total number of territories recorded on each visit and to provide their 'best estimate' of the number of Dartford Warbler territories on that site (or 1-km square) during the 1994 breeding season. All numeric estimates were cross-referenced to maps showing the locations of bird registrations. This crude form of territory-mapping allowed the total number of territories to be more readily estimated, and gave a more precise grid reference for each territory than that of the central grid reference of the site, which was also supplied by the observer.

Problems of multiple visits

Though observers were asked to visit each site at least twice, some observers visited a site only once, and others visited each site many times. This was shown to influence the number of Dartford Warbler territories recorded (see Results), as the more visits that were made to a site the more territories were found. In this paper, correction has been made for any underestimation of population size caused by insufficient visits to locate all of the territories. To do this, the cumulative number of territories recorded over one, two, three and four visits to each of 28 sites (or 1-km squares) was determined from the site maps. On the assumption that four visits located all territories present, the cumulative proportion of territories found on one, two and three visits was calculated and used to correct the estimate for each site (or 1-km square) depending on the number of visits made to each. These 28 sites and 1-km squares were those to which four visits were made, on which Dartford Warblers were present and for which sufficient mapped information was supplied to determine the cumulative number of territories recorded on successive visits. One further complication was that the number of visits to a site was not always recorded; for these sites, it was assumed that they were visited as often, on average, as those sites for which the number of visits was known. As none of the previous national population estimates for the Dartford Warbler have been corrected in this manner, the actual, uncorrected number of territories recorded is presented for comparison. One assumption of this method is that four visits were sufficient to record all territories present. Though the validity of this assumption is unknown, the additional number of territories recorded on the fourth visit was small (see Results). Similar corrections for survey efficiency have been used for other species, for example Red-throated *Gavia stellata* and Black-throated Divers *G. arctica* (Gomersall *et al.* 1984; Campbell & Talbot 1987) and Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* (Evans 1992).

A related problem was that of different individuals visiting the same site (or 1-km square) independently so that two (and in some cases three) recording forms, and thus two (or three) estimates of the total number of territories, were submitted for some sites or 1-km squares. There were several potential ways of resolving this problem: decide which estimate was most likely to be correct, based, for example, on observer experience; use the maximum of the two or three values on the basis that this would most likely approximate the 'true' value; compare the territory maps for each card to obtain a sum of unique (to each card) plus shared (between cards) territories; or use both values and quote a range. In this paper we have adopted the last of these options, as we believe this to be the most objective method.

Population trends of the Dartford Warbler since 1961

Population estimates for each of the years 1961 to 1993 were taken from the literature for comparison with the 1994 estimate. The following sources were used: 1961-62, Tubbs (1963); 1963-66, Tubbs (1967); 1967-73, County Bird Reports for Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex; 1974, Bibby & Tubbs (1975); 1975-83, RBBP; 1984, Robins & Bibby (1985a); 1985-1993, RBBP. The population of the New Forest in 1981 is unknown and has been

calculated here as the mean of the 1980 and 1982 figures. Grid references of territories for 1963 were taken from Follett (1964) and Tubbs (*in litt.*), and for 1974 and 1984 from Robins & Bibby (1985b). Some grid references for the 1963, 1974 and 1984 surveys were unavailable.

Results

Table 1a shows the number of sites (or 1-km squares) that were visited during the survey. Most of these were visited by a single observer (or team), though a few were covered independently, and probably unknowingly, by independent observers. Table 1b documents the number of successive visits made to each site (or 1-km square) and shows that there was great variation in this, some sites being visited only once, yet others being visited up to ten times. Also shown is the mean cumulative proportion of territories that were recorded on each successive visit to the 28 four-visit sites and 1-km squares. On average, the first visit to a site found 60% of Dartford Warbler territories, the first three visits 94%. The small proportion of additional territories found on a fourth visit suggests that further visits would have yielded only a few extra territories.

Table 1a. Number of sites (and 1-km squares in the New Forest) visited during 1994.
Number of independent observers covering site (or 1-km square) is given; this is equivalent to the number of population estimates made for each (see text for explanation).

	No. of independent observers			Total no. of sites or 1-km squares
	1	2	3	
Number of sites	261	13	1	275
Number of 1-km squares	166	24	1	191
Total	427	37	2	466

Table 1b. Number of successive visits made to each site (or 1-km square) and mean cumulative proportion of total territories of Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* found on each visit.
Mean proportions are based on those 28 four-visit sites and 1-km squares with sufficient information (see text for explanation).

	No. of successive visits made					
	1	2	3	4	>4	unknown
No. of sites	26	76	56	36	5	91
No. of 1-km squares	35	118	28	10	0	26
Mean cumulative % of territories located	59.7	86.9	94.3	100	100	

Table 2 lists the number of Dartford Warbler territories recorded in each county, along with an estimate for the national population. Corrected values are also given. During the 1994 survey, some 1,600-1,670 Dartford Warbler territories were located in ten counties: Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Sussex (East and West), Surrey and Berkshire. Three-quarters (76%) of the population was, however, restricted to the counties of Dorset and Hampshire, with most of the rest (a further 20%) in Devon and Surrey. Correcting for variation in the number of visits to each site suggested that the actual population may have been slightly higher (1,800-1,890 territories).

Table 2. Number of Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* territories in the UK in 1994. Actual numbers recorded, and numbers estimated following correction (in parentheses), are given for each county. Manners in which ranges were calculated and recorded numbers corrected are given in the text. Corrected figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentage figures are based on maximum values.

	No. of territories				% UK population	
	Min.		Max.			
	Act.	(Est.)	Act.	(Est.)	Act.	(Est.)
Cornwall	7	(8)	7	(8)	0.4	(0.4)
Devon	156	(167)	165	(177)	9.9	(9.4)
Somerset	7	(7)	7	(7)	0.4	(0.4)
Dorset	652	(733)	653	(734)	39.1	(38.9)
Hampshire						
New Forest	479	(567)	524	(619)	31.3	(32.8)
Elsewhere	98	(106)	98	(106)	5.9	(5.6)
Whole county	577	(673)	622	(725)	37.3	(38.4)
Isle of Wight	5	(6)	9	(11)	0.5	(0.6)
Sussex						
East Sussex	29	(29)	29	(29)	1.7	(1.5)
West Sussex	5	(5)	5	(5)	0.3	(0.3)
Surrey	155	(169)	173	(190)	10.3	(10.1)
Berkshire	2	(2)	2	(2)	0.1	(0.1)
UK total	1,595	(1,799)	1,672	(1,889)		

National and county estimates from earlier surveys and selected years are given in table 3 for comparison, and national estimates for each year during 1961-94 are plotted in fig. 1. Following the population crash after the cold winters of 1961/62 and 1962/63, the population built up slowly but steadily to a maximum in 1974 and 1975. Thereafter followed three apparent years of decline, with a further population low in 1979. From 1980, the population size gradually increased, though with setbacks, until 1994. The RBBP acknowledges that the 1983, and possibly the 1976, figures may be unreliable and are probably minima.

Table 3. Trends in Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* numbers over the last 35 years. Data taken from Tubbs (1963, 1967), Bibby & Tubbs (1975), Robins & Bibby (1985a & b), Bibby in Gibbons *et al.* (1993), Ogilvie *et al.* (1995) and this survey. Estimates of the total UK population are rounded. The 1994 figures are the number of territories recorded and have not been corrected, thus allowing direct comparison with other years.

County	1960-61	1963	1974	1984	1990	1992	1994
Cornwall	0	0	0	6	1	2	7
Devon	0	0	3	2	16	73	156-165
Somerset	0	0	0		0	0	7
Dorset	63	4	286	127	334	266	652-653
Wiltshire	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Hampshire	350	6	255	219	441	530	577-622
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	0	7	8	5-9
Sussex (East and West)	4	1	15	0	8	7	34
Surrey	40	0	1	69	120	37	155-173
Berkshire	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
Approx. UK total	460	11	560	420	930	930	1,600-1,670

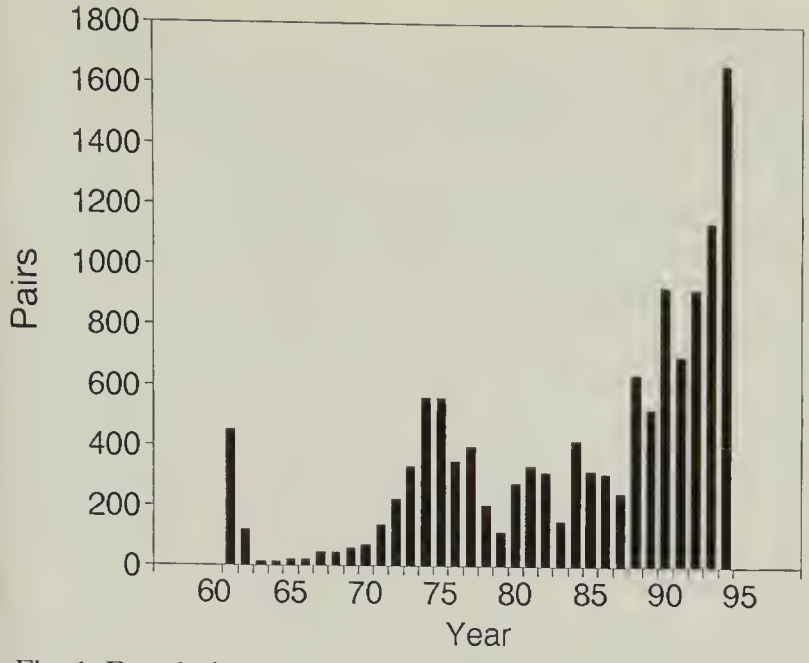


Fig. 1. Population trend of the Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* in the UK (all in England), 1961-94. Data sources are given in the text. For 1994, the uncorrected population maximum is used. Estimates for 1976 and 1983 are considered by the RBBP to be minima. Mean winter (December-February) temperature dropped below 2°C in 1962/63 and 1978/79.

The distribution and geographical patterns of abundance of Dartford Warblers in the UK during 1963, 1974, 1984 and 1994 are given in figs. 2a-d. The expansion in range over the 30-year period is striking.



Fig. 2. The distribution and geographical pattern of abundance of the Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* in the UK in (a) 1963, (b) 1974, (c) 1984 and (d) 1994. Increasing symbol sizes refer to increasing numbers of Dartford Warbler territories; these are, from the smallest to the largest, 1-4, 5-14, 15-49 and 50+ territories. For 1994, uncorrected population maxima are used. Symbols are placed conventionally at the centre of each 10-km square; thus, for some coastal squares, the symbols may fall in the sea. The following grid references were missing or unavailable: one Sussex territory in 1963; all Sussex territories in 1974 (it has been assumed that they occurred in the same two 10-km squares as in 1994); 40+ New Forest territories in 1974 which were not found but whose existence was surmised from the proportion of the Forest searched in that year; a few territories in 1984.

Table 4. Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* sites with 1% or more of the UK population in 1994. The 1994 figures are uncorrected to allow direct comparison with the 1974 and 1984 figures, which are also given. The 1994 figures, and the percentage of the UK population that these represent, are based on maxima.

Site name	County	Number of territories 1974	1984	1994	(% UK)
New Forest	Hampshire	250	194	524	(31.3)
Studland Heath (E&W) & Godlingston	Dorset	39	35	57	(3.4)
Holt Heath (N&S)	Dorset	30	4	45	(2.7)
Canford Heath	Dorset	5	5	41	(2.5)
Arne (all heaths)	Dorset	30	18	40	(2.4)
Hankley Common	Surrey	0	10	36	(2.2)
Thursley & Ockley Common	Surrey	0	17	36	(2.2)
Colaton Raleigh Common	Devon	0	0	36	(2.2)
Chobham Common (N&S)	Surrey	0	1	35	(2.1)
Pirbright & Cleygate Common	Surrey	0	23	34	(2.0)
Povington & West Holme Heath	Dorset	0	-2	34	(2.0)
Parley Common	Dorset	4	1	32	(1.9)
Harpford Common'	Devon	0	1	32	(1.9)
Woodbury Common	Devon	0	0	29	(1.7)
Town Common & St Catherine's Hill	Dorset	2	6	29	(1.7)
Ashdown Forest	E. Sussex	?	?	29	(1.7)
Ludshott Common	Hampshire	0	0	28	(1.7)
Hartland Moor	Dorset	17	14	26	(1.6)
Avon Forest Park (N&S)	Dorset	0	0	25	(1.5)
Woolmer Forest	Hampshire	0	0	23	(1.4)
Gore Heath (N&W) & Great Ovens	Dorset	5	4	22	(1.3)
Upton Heath	Dorset	2	1	21	(1.3)
Barnsfield Heath	Dorset	3	1	19	(1.1)
Wareham Forest	Dorset	5	1	19	(1.1)

Finally, table 4 lists the most important sites for Dartford Warblers in the UK in 1994. On a site-by-site basis, 75% (=1,252 territories) of the UK population was recorded on only 24 sites (Pritchard *et al.* 1992).

Discussion

Populations of Dartford Warblers in the UK are at their highest recorded levels in recent decades. The national population has nearly quadrupled in size since the last survey in 1984. Fears that habitat loss would ensure that the population high of nearly 600 pairs in the mid 1970s would never be reached again (Bibby in Lack 1986) have proved unfounded (Bibby in Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Unfortunately, despite population sizes during the first half of the twentieth and earlier centuries being poorly known, it is probable that the Dartford Warbler has still not regained its former historical range (Burton 1995; Holloway 1995). Despite occasional records from Suffolk in recent years, the last recorded breeding there was nearly 80 years ago, with the last in Essex in 1948 (Sharrock 1976). Apparently suitable habitat exists in some of these more northern and eastern counties, though the species has not yet spread farther north than Berkshire.

The Meteorological Office's Central England Temperature Record shows that the mean winter (December-February) temperature has dropped below 2°C on only two occasions since 1960, in the winters of 1962/63 and 1978/79. The population in the breeding seasons following both of these winters was very low (fig. 1), and the population trend of this species since 1961 can be seen as two separate phases of recovery, one following each of these extreme winters (Westerhoff & Tubbs 1991). A continuation of the run of current mild winters might see yet further expansion of range and numbers, possibly into East Anglia, though that region's relatively hard winters, the fragmented nature of its heathland and its dominance by grasses may limit expansion there. During 1994, there were up to 11 Dartford Warbler territories at altitudes of over 300 m, six in Cornwall, four in the Mendips and one on Dartmoor, so the possibility exists that this species might expand into upland heathland in southern Britain.

More than three-quarters of the UK population of Dartford Warblers was recorded in two counties, Dorset and Hampshire, with most of the rest in Devon and Surrey. With 75% of the UK population concentrated at only 24 sites, the species' distribution is still markedly restricted.

Although firm evidence is lacking, it is likely that the current expansion in numbers and range of the Dartford Warbler is mainly a consequence of a long run of mild winters. Improved management of the habitat, particularly the removal of Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and invasive conifers by staff working on the current county heathland projects in Dorset, northeast Hampshire, Surrey and West Sussex, will also have played a part. The extensive heathland fires of 1976 may also have been significant in the recovery, as by the late 1980s and early 1990s much of the Dartford Warbler's heathland habitat would have reached its 'optimal quality' (*sensu* Westerhoff & Tubbs 1991). The same fires may have been partly responsible for some of the population decline from 1976 to 1979.

Much of England's lowland heathland is currently dominated by mature dry heath and is thus suitable for Dartford Warblers. Inevitably, this heath will degenerate as it ages, and may become less suitable. Ideally, heathland management should aim to create a dynamic mosaic of heather age structures, ensuring that there is always suitable Dartford Warbler habitat even if in the short term this would lead to a reduction in the carrying capacity of the habitat.

Though population sizes in the years in which national surveys were undertaken were generally high, they were not markedly so. Thus, population sizes in 1974 and 1994 were approximately what might have been predicted from the trends of the preceding decades. This suggests that, with the exception of some years of inadequate coverage (e.g. 1976 and 1983), reports of county bird societies and more recently the RBBP have monitored this species successfully for the past three decades. It also questions whether national surveys are needed at all. If the population keeps expanding, however, it may become increasingly difficult for the RBBP to monitor the species successfully, and the need for a further national survey in 2004 should therefore be kept under review.

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Harman, Leigh Lock, James Packer, Andy Pay, Alan Perry, Brian Pickess, Mark Preece, Dave Richardson, Mark Robins, Jane Sears, Ken Smith, Peter Standley, Simon Stennett, Nigel Symes, Roger Thornett, Colin Tubbs, Diana Westerhoff, Richard White and Dave Wooldridge. Most of all, however, we should like to thank all those unnamed fieldworkers without whom this survey would not have been possible. The RSPB wishes to acknowledge the financial support of English Nature. Distribution maps were produced using DMAP.

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MONTHLY MARATHON

Everyone agreed that plate 24 showed the rear view of a perched raptor, but it was named as Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (59%), Merlin *F. columbarius* (17%), Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (7%), Barbary Falcon *F. pelegrinoides* (6%), Gyr Falcon *F. rusticolus* (5%), Red-footed Falcon *F. vespertinus* (3%), Lanner Falcon *F. biarmicus* (3%) and Northern Goshawk *A. gentilis* (less than 1%). The majority view was correct, this juvenile female Peregrine having been photographed in Dumfriesshire by Edmund Fellowes in July 1995.

The leading contenders, Jon Holt and Anthony McGeehan, both got it right and advance to six-in-a-row sequences of correct answers, more than halfway towards the prize of a SUNBIRD holiday in Africa, Asia or North America which awaits the winner.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (01767) 682969.



Plate 90. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 119: ninth stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. *Read the rules on page 24 of the January issue*, then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th June 1996.

The Best Annual Bird Report Awards

In this, the fifth year of the Awards, the voting procedures were overhauled, taking into account both the generally greatly raised standards (which resulted in last year's winner, Essex, achieving a score of 98%) and a variety of suggestions made by county-report editors and others.

In addition, the usual four judges — representing the Association of County Recorders and Editors, *British Birds*, the British Birds Rarities Committee and the Society of Wildlife Artists — were delighted to welcome the fifth judge, Derek Moore (Chairman of the British Trust for Ornithology's Membership & Development Committee and himself a former County Report Editor for Suffolk), now that the BTO has joined the group of organisations making these annual assessments.

The core of any annual report, the systematic list, was given even greater importance in this year's scoring, its general usefulness being rated from 0 to 5 by all five judges (instead of 0 to 4 by four judges, so contributing up to 25 points, as against previous years' 16 points). Other changes to the scoring system included a revision so that the absence of decorative (as distinct from documentary) drawings and photographs should not detract from a report's score (average illustrations *and no illustrations* both scoring 1, substandard illustrations 0 and particularly good illustrations 2); it had seemed unfair that those choosing not to include decorative illustrations for monetary reasons or because of an absence of local artistic talent should be penalised. An additional feature assessed was the use made in the report of survey or census data derived either from local studies or from BTO projects, reflecting encouragement of fieldwork by the club or society or good liaison with the local BTO representative.

Assessments of a total of 25 features (eleven as 0-1, ten as 0-2, three as 0-3 and one — separately by all five judges — as 0-5), gave a maximum possible score of 65. After independent voting by the five judges, there was a three-way tie for first place. After further assessment of just those three reports, the judges were still unable to separate them, and, indeed, felt that to do so would be unfair. All three had strong and weaker points, but were also all greatly admired by all of the five judges. The top ten reports are shown in table 1.

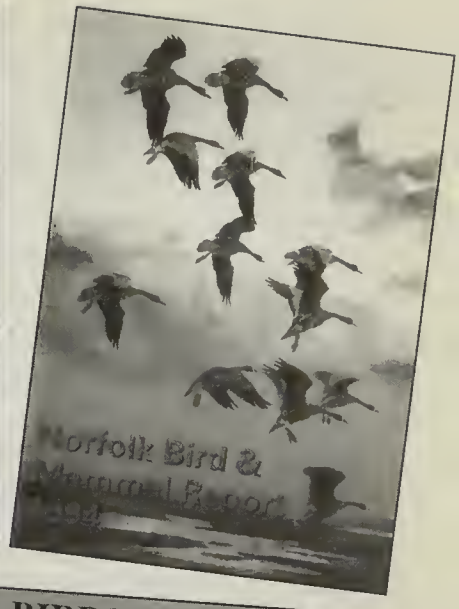
There are special reasons to congratulate all the three winners: *Avon* has achieved top spot after having never before been among the leaders; *Essex* has achieved a remarkable hat-trick, having been the winner in both 1994 and 1995; and *Norfolk*, which was third in the competition's first year, has successfully taken full account of recommendations when continuing the overhaul of its style and content noted last year. All three fully deserve their success.

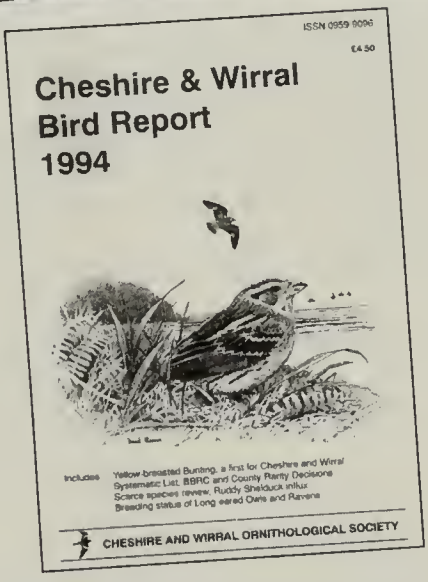
Smaller clubs and societies inevitably find it hard to compete with the richer organisations. *Cheshire*, *Derbyshire* and *Cleveland* (with 200-400 members) and *SK58* (a single 10-km square east of Sheffield), *Flamborough* and *Sheffield* (under 200 members) all produced admirable reports.

[*Brit. Birds* 89: 214-216, May 1996] © British Birds Ltd 1996









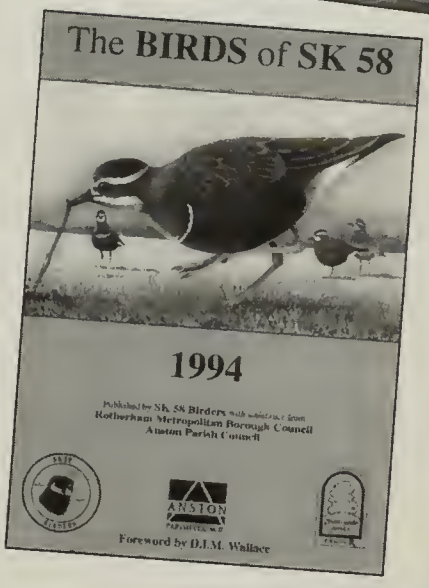


Table 1. The top ten annual bird reports for 1994.

Position	County (with positions in 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993)	Editors	Score
1st=	*Avon* (– 5 9 –)	A. H. Davis	82%
1st=	*Essex* (– 2 1 1)	G. C. Bond, D. Rhymes & S. D. Wood	82%
1st=	*Norfolk* (3 23 24 9)	Michael J. Seago	82%
4th=	*Cornwall* (2 2 4 5)	S. M. Christophers	78%
4th=	*Devon* (– – – 8)	Keith Grant & Dave Smallshire	78%
6th	*London* (8 4 3 2)	M. A. Hardwick	77%
7th	*Shetland* (4 – 7 –)	Kevin Osborn	75%
8th	*Cheshire* (8 10 9 5)	D. J. Steventon	74%
9th	*Oxfordshire* (– – – –)	Ian Lewington	69%
10th	*Derbyshire* (5 6 7 –)	R. M. R. James	68%

In medium-membership category (200-400 members): 1st *Cheshire*, 2nd *Derbyshire* and 3rd *Cleveland* (edited by D. Graham Bell). In small-membership category (under 200 members): 1st *SK58* (edited by M. Thomas & R. Hardcastle), and equal 2nd *Flamborough* (edited by Mark Newsome & Paul J. Willoughby) and *Sheffield* (edited by K. R. Gould & A. J. Morris).

This year, the judges' votes and comments have all been made available to ACRE and a fuller summary than is possible here will be published for the benefit of all report editors in the newsletter *Newsacre*. Examples of many of the excellent features in the winning (and other) reports will be highlighted there. We also strongly recommend that anyone responsible for compiling an annual bird report should buy a copy of one or more of those listed below, for use as a model.

For many general points, readers (and especially any new report editors) are referred to previous accounts of this competition (*Brit. Birds* 85: 299-308; 86: 163-165; 87: 171-173; 88: 218-220).

This year's top reports can be obtained as follows:

AVON Dr H. E. Rose, 12 Birbeck Road, Bristol BS9 1BD (£4.00 + 50p p&p)
ESSEX Mrs J. Franks, 112 Longfields, Ongar, Essex CM5 9DF (£8.00 + 60p p&p)
NORFOLK Mrs Mary Dorling, St Edmundsbury, 6 New Road, Hethersett, Norwich, Norfolk NR9 3HH (£5.00 post free)
CORNWALL Greg Conway, Tregenna, Cooksland, Bodmin, Cornwall PL31 2AR (£5.50)
DEVON K. R. Grant, Whitcombe Farm, Kenn, Exeter, Devon EX6 7XQ (£4.00 + 50p p&p)
LONDON Mrs V. Friedman, 5 Temple Close, Cassiobury, Watford, Hertfordshire WD1 3DR (£5.00 + 50p p&p)
SHETLAND Ian Sandison, 9 Burnside, Lerwick, Shetland (£4.00)
CHESHIRE D. J. Steventon, Welland House, 207 Hurdsfield Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 2PX (£4.95 incl. p&p)
OXFORDSHIRE R. Overall, 30 Hunsdon Road, Iffley, Oxford OX4 4JE (£4.00)
DERBYSHIRE R. W. Key, 3 Farningham Close, Spondon, Derby DE21 7DZ (£5.50 incl. p&p)
SK58 Mark Thomas, 2 Windermere Court, North Anston, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S31 7GJ (£3.50)
CLEVELAND Colin Dodsworth, 63 Stokesley Crescent, Billingham, Cleveland TS23 1NF (£4.00)
FLAMBOROUGH P. J. Willoughby, 55 Holt Park Crescent, Holt Park, Leeds LS16 7SL (£2.95 + 40p p&p)
SHEFFIELD Tony Morris, 4a Raven Road, Nether Edge, Sheffield S7 1SB (£4.50 incl. p&p)

J. T. R. Sharrock (BB), Robert Gillmor (SWLA), R. A. Hume (BBRC), Derek Moore (BTO) and Michael J. Rogers (ACRE)
c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ



LOOKING BACK

One hundred years ago: 'Perhaps you may consider the nesting of the Hedge Accentor [*Prunella modularis*] on the Bass Rock as worthy of insertion in "The Zoologist". On May 16th I found a nest of this bird containing four eggs. The nest was placed under an overhanging tuft of grass which grew on a low rock-face. This, I believe, is the first case of the Hedge Accentor breeding on the Bass. I may mention also at the same time that I found a Blackbird's nest with four eggs in one of the beam-holes in an old house on the rock. (*Zoologist* Third series 20: 304)

Twenty-five years ago, on 30th May 1971, 'a small, dull passerine feeding on bare ground behind the dunes' at Minsmere, Suffolk, was 'recognised immediately [by F. K. Cobb] as a Trumpeter Finch [*Bucanetes githagineus*], a species which he had previously seen in Morocco . . . the unlikelihood of a natural origin caused him to dismiss the bird as an escape.' Nevertheless—32 months, extensive investigations and two further relevant records (8th June 1971 on Handa, Sutherland, and 29th October 1973 on Alderney, Channel Islands) later—the Minsmere record was accepted as the first for Britain & Ireland. (*Brit. Birds* 70: 45-49)

REVIEWS

Buntings and Sparrows: a guide to the buntings and North American sparrows.

By Clive Byers, Urban Olsson & Jon Curson.

Pica Press, Mountfield, 1995. 334 pages; 39 colour plates. ISBN 1-873403-19-4. £28.00.

It is a real treat to review a book about which one can say 'This book is great, go and buy it'. This identification guide follows a tried-and-tested formula, and almost every species is relevant to the Palearctic birder, with 42 Old World buntings and 64 New World sparrows, many of which either have occurred or might occur as vagrants in Western Europe. It is a must for the serious birder.

The layout will be familiar to most birders, but there are none of the tiny paintings found in similar books, which were, in my opinion, of little value. The images are large, accurate and life-like, and suggest that the talents of Clive Byers are maturing. The text is excellent, with a clear and concise discussion of identification followed by details of plumage, moult, voice, etc.

I could find no major inaccuracies, but felt that an extra few plates dealing just with 'confusable' species (e.g. just female/immature Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* and Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*, immatures of all *Spizella* sparrows, or a broader range of Savannah Sparrows *Ammodramus sandwichensis* on one plate) would have made this an even better buy. Despite this, it rivals *Moult and Ageing of European Passerines* as my choice for best bird book of the last couple of years. Buy it now!

COLIN BRADSHAW

Swifts: a guide to the swifts and treeswifts of the World.

By Phil Chantler & Gerald Driessens.

Pica Press, Mountfield, 1995. 237 pages; 24 colour plates; 97 maps; 62 line-drawings. ISBN 1-873403-31-3. £26.00.

This is the second in the series of Pica Press books on bird families, and follows the format of the excellent *Woodpeckers* (1995; reviewed *Brit. Birds* 88: 287, 456). The present book covers 92 species of swifts and four species of treeswifts. All species are illustrated in colour, some for the first time. The distribution maps are clear and the text is well set out. The introductory chapters include an excellent section on 'Relationships and taxonomy', though this would have been easier to understand had a glossary been included. The taxonomy mainly follows Sibley & Monroe (1990, 1993), with reasons given where a different approach has been taken. The species accounts have been well researched and reflect the author's thoroughness. Gerald Driessens's colour plates are generally excellent, though some of the African spinetails are surely too fat, with the result that they resemble the space shuttle. The use of coloured backgrounds is distracting in some cases and I much preferred the artist's work in *Dutch Birding* (15: 97-135), where the birds are depicted against a white background. The line-drawings are superb.

This is the first book to tackle this extremely difficult group and, while it is not the last word, especially regarding the *Collocalia* swiftlets, it is certainly the state of the art so far as swift identification is concerned.

IAIN ROBERTSON

Tits, Nuthatches & Treecreepers.

By Simon Harrap & David Quinn.

A & C Black, London, 1996. 392 pages; 36 colour plates; 115 colour maps. ISBN 0-7136-3964-4. £27.99.

This book, the latest in the award-winning series of Helm identification guides, includes birds which are amongst our most familiar. Familiarity, we are told, can breed contempt;

some birders even refer to the Paridae as 'trash birds'. This beautiful book goes a considerable way towards redressing the balance (although I suspect that a birder who dismisses any species as trash probably does not read!). And so it should, because this group of closely related species (110, in four families) is of great interest for its ecology (small passerines, resident whether at temperate or tropical latitude) and evolutionary history, which often is as complex as any found among birds. All this is well reflected in the present work.

Introductory chapters, describing systematics and giving notes on the species texts, are followed by David Quinn's superb plates covering all species, a range of plumages, and with range maps and brief descriptions. These are followed by the species accounts, covering plumages, voice, distribution, movements, habitat, status, habits, breeding biology, moult, geographic variation and detailed systematic relationships. The first-ever 'monograph' on these families, this is comprehensive, authoritative and a delight to read. Serious birdwatchers will find much of interest.

Andy Gosler

The Blackcap.

By C. F. Mason.

Hamlyn, London, 1995. 126 pages; 19 colour plates; 4 colour illustrations; 20 line-drawings. ISBN 0-600-58006-7. Paperback £12.99.

This is another excellent little book in the Hamlyn Species Guides series. C. F. Mason has provided us with 'an authoritative and highly readable book on [one of] the most fascinating bird species of Britain and Europe' (HSGs' intention). It is dedicated to the Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, a splendid little warbler and one of Britain's finest songsters (D. A. Christie in his editor's foreword). Over the 126 pages in octavo format, one can find topics ranging from 'Blackcaps and their allies', ecology and behaviour, breeding, population biology and migration to recent findings on the genetic control mechanisms of life-history traits and microevolutionary processes. Although a comprehensive treatment of the subject is not possible in such a short book with a bibliography of 160 citations, this volume nonetheless charms its readers with its vivid style, emphasised by delightful illustrations. *The Blackcap* is a welcome contribution to the public awareness of this lively and successful species.

P. Berthold

Key Areas for Threatened Birds in the Neotropics.

By David C. Wege & Adrian J. Long.

BirdLife Conservation Series No. 5. BirdLife International, Cambridge, 1995. 311 pages; 15 line-drawings; 57 site and distribution maps. ISBN 0-946888-31-0. £24.25.

Following a 20-page introduction and 'overview' of the state of bird conservation in the neotropics, the main bulk of this meticulously edited and presented book is a country-by-country listing of the most important known areas for threatened bird species, with details of each area and its vegetation, present protection (or lack of it) and the status of the threatened birds that have been recorded. No birdwatcher with any concern for conservation, or any hope of being able to make a contribution, should visit the neotropics without at least consulting this book.

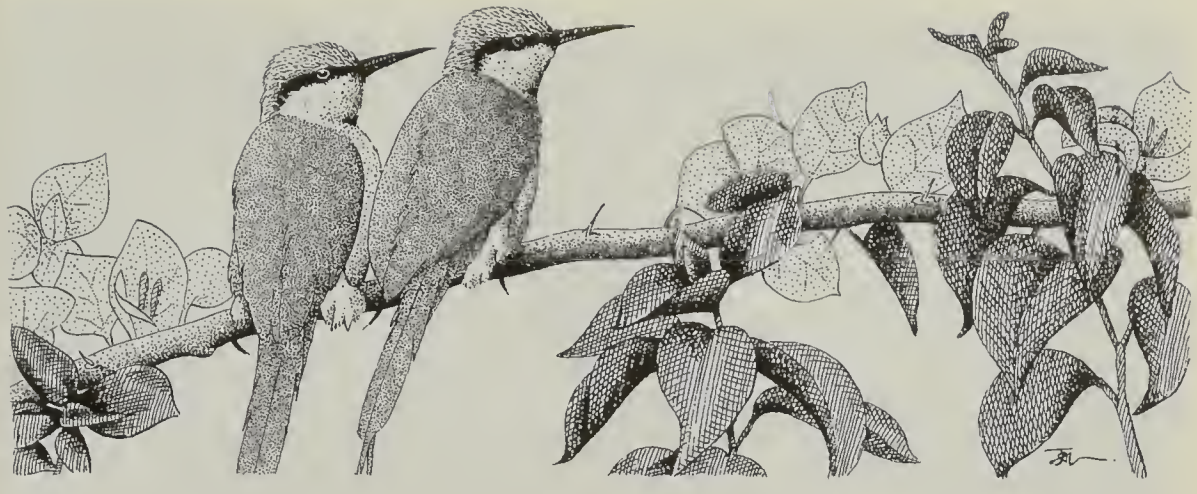
D. W. Snow

ALSO RECEIVED

Looking After Cage Birds. By David Alderton. (Blandford, London, 1996. 128 pages. ISBN 0-7137-2578-8. Paperback, £8.99)

Falconry: art and practice. By Emma Ford. Revised edn. (Blandford, London, 1995. 191 pages. ISBN 0-7137-2588-5. Paperback, £10.99)

Birds of New Zealand: wild south. By Don Hadden. CD-ROM. (ProTech International, Nelson, 1993-95. About £25.00)



The United Arab Emirates

Colin Richardson

ABSTRACT Like other famous bird-rich areas such as Morocco, Israel, Turkey and Thailand, the location of the United Arab Emirates has created an avifauna with elements from more than one zoogeographical area. This meeting place of Afrotropical, Palearctic and occasionally Oriental species is a rich area for study by local ornithologists and acts as a magnet to today's travelling birders.

The excitement of birdwatching in the Trucial States (as the eastern Gulf States were called prior to full independence in the early 1970s) was first recognised by the British Forces stationed in the area. As the Gulf States started to grow in political and economic importance (Dubai was a main stopover for flying-boats to the Far East in the 1930s), British servicemen were tasked with subduing coastal piracy and calming tribal insurgencies. As these outbreaks were minimal, the expeditionary forces' policing duties declined and many spent much of their time documenting the local wildlife, sometimes with the blessing of their commanders.

Now, thanks to them and to a handful of dedicated people during the 1970s and 1980s, the United Arab Emirates has perhaps the most comprehensively studied avifauna in the whole of Arabia. The area remained undiscovered by itinerant birders (as opposed to ornithologists), however, until about 1983. Shortly afterwards, enough information had been assembled to compile the country's first birdwatching guide, *The Birds of the United Arab Emirates* (Richardson 1990a).

Visiting birdwatchers soon started arriving, though rather hesitantly at first, encouraged by a species list close to 400, which included several Western Palearctic specialities which were difficult to find elsewhere. At last, Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*, Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii*, White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*, Black-crowned Sparrow-lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*, Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger*, Plain



Plate 91. Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, UAE, May 1990 (*D. Robinson*). About 15-20 pairs breed on rocky islands.



Plate 92. Socotra Cormorants *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*, UAE, autumn 1988 (*C. Richardson*)



Plate 93. Crab-plovers *Dromas ardeola*, UAE, June 1990 (*D. Robinson*)



Plate 94. Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*, **UAE, June 1993** (*C. Richardson*)



Plate 95. White-tailed Lapwing *Chettusia leucura*, **Oman, November 1992** (*Hanne & Jens Eriksen*). Uncommon passage migrant in the UAE.

Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus* and Yellow-throated Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis* were within reach.

The United Arab Emirates is relatively small (about the size of Scotland) and fast dual carriageways link all cities and towns. Most sites are within an easy day's drive. In consequence, a visit of eight to 12 days should allow enough time to see all the resident specialities and most of the migrants for which the region is famous. The latest official checklist (Richardson & Aspinall 1996)* includes 395 species, but the number likely to be seen varies from month to month. For instance, the *Emirates Bird Report:18* (1994) published a list of 309 species seen during the whole of 1993, with a maximum of 237 in October, and 225 in March. Winter months offer about 190 species, while in July numbers dip to about 105 species.

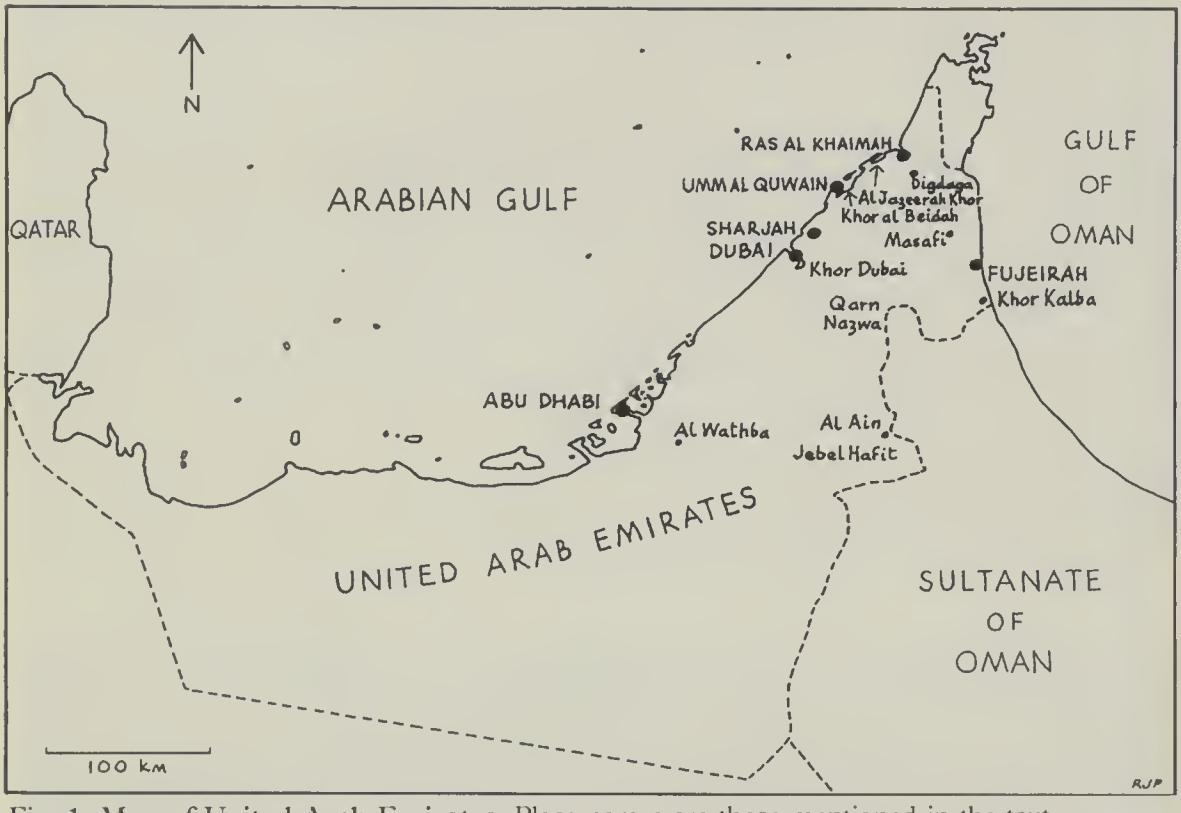


Fig. 1. Map of United Arab Emirates. Place names are those mentioned in the text.

A visit between September and April using a good, well-organised itinerary should produce around 180 species, a worthy total for such a small, desert country. The UAE is situated on a migratory crossroads (Richardson & Chapman 1988). A north-south flyway conveys species between the main Palearctic landmass and Africa, while a less-used east-west route takes birds between the Near East and the Indian subcontinent. Add to this an influx of Indian Ocean seabirds in summer and a scattering of Siberian vagrants in autumn and you have a recipe for exciting birdwatching throughout the year.

The country can be divided simply into four habitat zones:

1. Coasts and mudflats.
2. Mountains and wadis (dry/wet watercourses).
3. Deserts and gravel plains.
4. Gardens and agricultural areas (man-made irrigated habitats).

*Available (Dhs 40 or UK cheque for £7.00) from Colin Richardson, PO Box 50394, Dubai, UAE.

Coasts and mudflats

The Arabian Gulf, with its shallow saline lagoons and extensive mudflats, serves as an important winter feeding ground for millions of Arctic and central Asian migrant shorebirds. A total of 126,000 wetland birds was counted in January 1995 during the Asian Waterfowl Census (Aspinall & Richardson 1994), including 41,000 wildfowl, 42,000 waders, 38,000 gulls and 4,200 terns.

Khor Dubai is the most interesting of the country's natural wetlands. It holds the densest assembly of waders, with up to 12,000 present at any one time. It is the only site in the country where Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* can be found reliably, sometimes in flocks of up to 4,000 (Uttley *et al.* 1988). Other species of interest there are Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* (late October to March only), Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus* and Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (September to April). Khor al Beidah, at Umm al Quwain, is the most accessible site at which to see Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* (plate 93) in winter, when over 300 are present at the species' high-tide roost. Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* is regular there, too. One of the World's largest colonies of Socotra Cormorants (plate 92) nests nearby in late autumn (Howe 1989) and there are often flocks of several thousand flying offshore, visible from the coast. About 100 km northeast of Dubai is Al Jazeerah Khor, another network of lagoons. It is a good place to see Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, while flocks of Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei* and Saunders's Terns *Sterna saundersi* (plate 96) occur in winter, best viewed from the high dunes which guard the bay. These scrub-covered dunes usually host several species of *Sylvia* warbler in winter and spring, including Desert *S. nana*, Orphean *S. hortensis* and Ménétries's Warblers *S. mystacea* (plate 105) and Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca* of the Siberian race *blythi*.

On the east coast, south of Fujeirah, lies Khor Kalba. Facing the Gulf of Oman, this tidal creek has a unique area of relict mangrove forest, inhabited by the endemic *kalbaensis* subspecies of Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* (plate 100). Fewer than 50 pairs remain and the authorities have still not taken steps to protect the area. Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* of the race (or species?) *rama* breeds in the mangroves and is usually present at least from February to June (Hirschfeld 1994). This is also the country's only wintering site of Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*, present from October to early April. Great care should be taken in separating it from Squacco Heron *A. ralloides*, which also occurs (Richardson & Bannon 1991a). Sadly, the mudflats are increasingly being damaged by four-wheel-drive vehicles, while fishermen catch the crabs which are the kingfishers' primary food.

The sea there is rich in marine life (including several species of turtles, sharks, rays and dolphins) and seabirds are usually abundant. Sooty Gull, Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*, Crested Tern *S. bergii*, Lesser Crested Tern *S. bengalensis*, White-cheeked Tern, Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* and Arctic Skua *S. parasiticus* are seasonally common. The less common Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri* of the race (or species?) *persicus* and Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* are sometimes visible from this 80-km-long coastline.

Mountains and wadis

The UAE has a 40-km-wide easterly backbone of mountains, which rise to about 1,000 m. The highest mountain is Jebel Hafit, near Al Ain, which, at 1,500 m,



Plate 96. Saunders's Tern *Sterna saundersi*, Oman, September 1989 (*Hanne & Jens Eriksen*)



Plate 97. Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*, Oman, November 1993 (*Hanne & Jens Eriksen*)



Plate 98. Black-crowned Sparrow-lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*, Oman, April 1992 (*Hanne & Jens Eriksen*)



Plate 99. Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*, **UAE, November 1989** (*D. Robinson*)



Plate 100. Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris*, **UAE, November 1989** (*D. Robinson*)

towers above the surrounding plain. Although widespread in most mountain areas, Hume's Wheatear (plate 102) can often be difficult to find, and Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* can be even more elusive.

Most of the indigenous species inhabiting the mountains rarely stray far from this habitat, so it is always worth searching some of the acacia plains and the more-promising-looking wadis. Those in the cretaceous hills north of the small market town of Masafi, for instance, can produce a good selection of species, particularly in spring (Richardson 1988). Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*, White-spectacled Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthopygos* and Pale Crag Martin *Hirundo obsoleta* are easy to find, but Sand Partridge *Ammoperdix heyi*, Streaked Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta* and House Bunting *Emberiza striolata* need a bit more work. Arabian Babbler *Turdoides squamiceps* favours areas with cover, sometimes in short supply in this overgrazed land. Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* can be encountered anywhere in the mountains, but is more reliably seen (or at least heard) shortly after dusk at a favourite waterhole.

Of the migrants, Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthoprymna* (plate 103) and Small Whitethroat *Sylvia minula* are the most common. Less common, Plain Leaf Warbler—looking like a tiny grey Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*—rarely keeps silent, and can therefore be located by its quiet, though insistent 'tch, tch, tch....' call.

Birds of prey are rather scarce in the Emirates. A few pairs of Barbary Falcons *Falco pelegrinoides* nest on the higher crags, while the mountains are also favoured by migrant Short-toed Eagles *Circaetus gallicus* and Long-legged Buzzards *Buteo rufinus*. The most interesting raptor in the area is the Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*. This *negevensis* dark race can be a real prize if encountered, usually soaring high, like a giant flying carpet, north and east of Al Ain.

Deserts and gravel plains

The desert region lies almost entirely to the west of the mountains. It ranges in width from 20 km in the north to over 150 km in the south and west. Inland, Abu Dhabi emirate consists almost entirely of sand dunes and gravel plains, where birdlife is very sparse. In the northern emirates, the sand desert is punctuated by groves of trees, *Prosopis cineraria*, which host Small Whitethroat in winter, Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida* in spring and nesting Yellow-throated Sparrow from April to August. Open desert is the best place to find Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*, Desert Warbler and Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, while the flat gravel areas between the dunes are favoured by flocks of Black-crowned Sparrow-larks (plate 98). Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis* is usually encountered in the sand-desert areas, particularly inland from Umm al Quwain.

Nearer the mountains, east of a line from Al Ain to Ras al Khaimah, the sand dunes give way to a broad gravel plain scattered with *Acacia tortilis*. This savannah plain is relatively rich ornithologically, particularly close to the base of the mountains. Red-tailed Wheatear (mid October to March) and Arabian Babbler are most likely there, while Variable Wheatear *Oenanthe picata* (of the nominate subspecies) is a scarce winter visitor from late September to February and is likely to be found perched low in a tree at the base of the foothills. The *picata* subspecies of Variable Wheatear looks superficially like Hume's Wheatear, but, when directly

compared, the latter is obviously strong-billed and large-headed, with a shiny black body and bright-white belly and back, whereas the smaller Variable looks rather sooty black (the female is dark brown), and the white belly looks rather dirty in comparison. Twelve species of wheatear occur in the Emirates and are best separated in all seasons using Clement & Harris's excellent identification paper (*Brit. Birds* 80: 137-157, 187-238).

Gardens and agricultural areas

Without the irrigated man-made habitats, many Arabian migrants would probably not survive the rigours of the desert. The United Arab Emirates' rulers have planted tens of thousands of trees in the desert. There are vast grass fields in the oases and golf-courses and parks in all the large cities. These sites attract thousands of migrant birds. All are irrigated by desalinated water or from fast-depleting prehistoric aquifers beneath the desert.

The well-established agricultural area around Digdaga and Hamraniyah, south of Ras al Khaimah, has produced more than its fair share of excitement in the last few years (Richardson 1991). Besides its resident population of hundreds of Indian Rollers *Coracias benghalensis* (plate 99) and Little Green Bee-eaters *Merops orientalis*, the area is well known for its ability to draw in migrant birds of prey. Six species of eagle have been recorded, including Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* and Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*, and both Pallid *Circus macrourus* and Montagu's Harriers *C. pygargus* are regular from September to March. The most interesting phenomenon was the number of Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni* attracted to the grass fields in the springs of 1993 and 1994. Numbers reached a peak of 109 in early April 1994, with most departing by 19th April (Aspinall 1993, 1994). They were found to be feeding on caterpillars of the Convolvulus Hawk-moth *Agrius convolvuli*, which were abundant during those years. Unfortunately, the quality of water pumped from the wells dropped in late 1994, many fields were abandoned, and Lesser Kestrel numbers were lower in 1995. The varying ecology of these large fields seems to appeal to a number of opportunist colonists. The site hosts the country's only breeding Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis* (largest flock, of over 300, recorded in March 1995) and European Rollers *Coracias garrulus* (Richardson 1990b), while Bank Mynahs *Acridotheres ginginianus* take their chances nesting in old wells between some of the fields. Flocks of over 500 Pale Rock Sparrows *Petronia brachydactyla* (plate 107) are recorded there from mid March to early April.

Also regular at cultivations are a number of interesting central Asian subspecies which occur from September to April. These include 'Masked' Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba personata* (plate 104), 'Siberian' Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata maura*, 'Caucasian' Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica magna*, 'Eastern' Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros phoenicuroides* and 'Steppe' Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor pallidirostris*. The last species is a regular migrant and it is interesting to compare *pallidirostris* with the very black-masked local subspecies, *aucheri* (Richardson 1989).

The camel race tracks at Al Ain and Al Wathba (Abu Dhabi) are grassed and irrigated inside the race-track perimeter. These large areas act as magnets for larks, pipits, wheatears and other tired and hungry migrants. The rare specialities found there from October to February include Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha*



Plate 101. Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*, UAE, March 1990 (*D. Robinson*)



Plate 102. Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger*, UAE, January 1995 (*C. Richardson*)



Plate 103. Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthoprymna*, UAE, January 1990 (*D. Robinson*)



Plate 104. Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* of race *personata*, UAE, February 1995 (*C. Richardson*)



Plate 105. Ménétries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*, UAE, March 1990 (*A. Chapman*)



Plate 106. Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica*, UAE, April 1990 (*D. Robinson*). Very common breeding resident.



Plate 107. Pale Rock Sparrows *Petronia brachydactyla*, UAE, April 1994 (*D. Robinson*)

bimaculata, Oriental Lark *Alauda gulgula* and Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (James 1994). Between 08.00 and 09.30 hours throughout the year, flocks of up to 200 Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (plate 97) arrive, and by mid morning from September to March half-a-dozen Pallid and Montagu's Harriers can often be seen foraging over the fields, providing opportunities to study the different 'face' and wing patterns (Hirschfeld & Richardson 1992). Small groups of Cream-coloured Coursers *Cursorius cursor* (plate 94) are attracted to the Al Ain camel track in autumn and winter, while Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* and Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* can occur between August and October. Since 1993, the nearby plantations at Al Wathba have regularly attracted small groups of Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus* (plate 101) in November and March. Numbers reached 60 or more throughout most of March 1994 and 1995, while up to ten have been seen together on several occasions in November. As the fruit trees mature, it is expected that this may become a regular stopover site for this enigmatic species.

Striated Scops Owl *Otus brucei* occurs only 15 minutes' drive from the centre of Dubai. Several pairs nest in Mushrif National Park, and individuals can sometimes be seen after sunset, feeding under spotlights near one of the leisure centres. At least one pair of Pharaoh Eagle Owls *Bubo ascalaphus* nests on the rocky outcrop at Qarn Nazwa. A trip there at sunset can be rewarded by a pair calling from the summit, just visible in silhouette against the glow from a nearby oilfield flare.

Late autumn is the traditional time for Siberian and other vagrants, and the parks and gardens of Dubai and Abu Dhabi are the best places to find them. Such interesting species as Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*, Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*, Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris*, White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis*, Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*, Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi* and Chestnut-breasted Bunting *Emberiza stewarti* have been recorded in October-November (Richardson & Pitt 1990; Bannon & Richardson 1993; James 1993a, 1993b; Richardson 1993). In 1991, it was estimated that at least a further 50 species were likely to occur in the UAE (Richardson & Bannon 1991b), and in the subsequent five years no fewer than 20 of them have been reliably reported: testimony to the amazing potential of the region for new discoveries to be made.

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Colin Richardson, PO Box 50394, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

A joint *British Birds*-SUNBIRD trip to the United Arab Emirates, led by Paul Holt and Colin Richardson, will take place during 27th November to 8th December 1996. Until 1st October 1996, bookings will be accepted only from *British Birds* subscribers, who also qualify for a 10% discount on the full price. For details, contact SUNBIRD, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; phone Sandy (01767) 682969; fax Sandy (01767) 692481.

Publication with this paper of plates 91-107 in colour has been subsidised by a donation from the bird-tour company *SUNBIRD.*



REQUESTS

Photographs of 1995 rarities needed

Colour prints, black-and-white prints and colour transparencies are needed to illustrate the Rarities Committee's next report. Please send prints or slides (as soon as possible) to Mrs Sheila Cobban, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ. We rely on readers' help, so that we can include the best possible selection.

Photo requirements

For future features in *British Birds*, we seek colour transparencies, colour prints or black-and-white prints of the following:

Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* (in flight from below)
Large falcons *Falco* (Lanner *F. biarmicus*, Saker *F. cherrug*, Gyr *F. rusticolus*, Peregrine *F. peregrinus* and Barbary *F. pelegrinoides*)
Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*
Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* (adult)
Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
All 1995 rarities (see previous Request)

Please send transparencies or prints to Mrs Sheila Cobban, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

FROM THE RARITIES COMMITTEE'S FILES

ZEISS

With the removal from the British & Irish List by the BOU Records Committee of three records of White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera*, all from the period before the formation of the British Birds Rarities Committee in 1958 (1917, 1933 and 1955), just two records now remain fully accepted. Details of the first, in East Sussex in 1869, were published recently (*Brit. Birds* 88: 367-368, plate 101). The second, on the basis of which the species is included in Category A, was documented in the county report (Lines 1987), but—since, at the time, it was regarded only as the fifth British record—details were not published in *British Birds*. To rectify that, the descriptions and drawings submitted to the BBRC are now reproduced here (with only minimal subediting).

White-winged Lark in Norfolk

SPECIES White-winged Lark.
DATES AND TIMES OF OBSERVATION 22.10.81 (JL) and 24.10.81 (JAWM).
PLACE King's Lynn Sugar Beet Factory, Norfolk.
OBSERVERS Dr John Lines and John A. W. Moyes. First found and first identified by JL.
OPTICAL AIDS 12×50 Pentax.
DISTANCE FROM BIRD 20-30 yards.
SPECIES PRESENT FOR COMPARISON ALONGSIDE Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*.
PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE SPECIES Nil.
WEATHER NOTES 22.10.81: wind northerly, force blustery; light conditions good; visibility good; cloud cover light.

The bird was first noticed in flight at 13.55 GMT on 22nd October, when flushed off open rough ground with Sky Larks, the general pallor of the bird and striking white wing-bars immediately noticed. Subsequently seen on the ground on three occasions at a range of 20-30 yards for several minutes at a time, and again in flight on three occasions before finally being lost to view.

When seen on the ground, the heavier, stouter bill was very noticeable. No crest present. There was a prominent white superciliary eye-stripe and dark eye. The crown was a rich rufous brown, slightly less rich on the neck and back; however, the wing-coverts were a similar rich tone. The scapular feathers were light brown, having dark shafts and dark subterminal patches. [Letter subsequently noted that 'Wing-coverts brown; primary coverts rich rufous brown similar in quality to the crown, the other coverts less rich.']

There was slight rufous streaking on the sides of the breast and flanks which were otherwise white. The overall length of the bird appeared to be the same as a Sky Lark (i.e. *c.* 7 inches [*c.* 18 cm]), but the tail was relatively short, the outer feathers being white. In flight, the white secondary feathers were very striking, as were the white underwing-coverts, and the outer web of the second primary was noticeably white.

The bird was observed on the ground with the Sky Larks, and seemed more timid than they. Also it did not seem readily tolerated by the [other] larks, who appeared not to like it feeding too close.

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The bird was first seen on 22nd by JL, who informed JAWM, who subsequently saw the bird on 24th. On both occasions, only one observer was present.

The following notes were supplied by JAWM:

'White-winged Lark, King's Lynn Sugar-Beet Factory on 24th October 1982.

'About the size of Sky Lark, but with shorter tail. Looked pale in comparison with Sky Lark. Jizz, and general behaviour much as Calandra Lark *M. calandra* (a species with which I am familiar). Bill intermediate in size, between Sky Lark and Calandra. Crown, nape and hind neck light rufous brown, back pale brown, the dark brown shafts and distal tips to individual mantle feathers noticeable at 15 yards distance. All wing-coverts tinged rufous, being strongest on the primary coverts and palest on the secondary coverts. The lesser and median coverts intermediate in hue between the two extremes, thus creating a reddish patch on the folded wing. The white bar on the secondary flight feathers was partly visible when the bird was on the ground feeding, becoming much more noticeable when in flight. The white outer web to the second primary was also visible on the flying bird at a range of 10-15 yards. The white underwing linings from the axillaries to the wrist (carpal joint) was separated from the dull white area on the underside of the secondaries by a band of brown which extended to and merged with a slightly lighter shade of brown on the underside of the primaries, thus forming a unique underwing pattern visible when the bird flew overhead. Sides of neck and breast light reddish-buff becoming paler towards the flanks, with sides of the breast indistinctly streaked brown. Throat, central breast and belly white. Sky Larks displayed an aggressive tendency towards the White-winged Lark, not tolerating a close presence even when in flight.

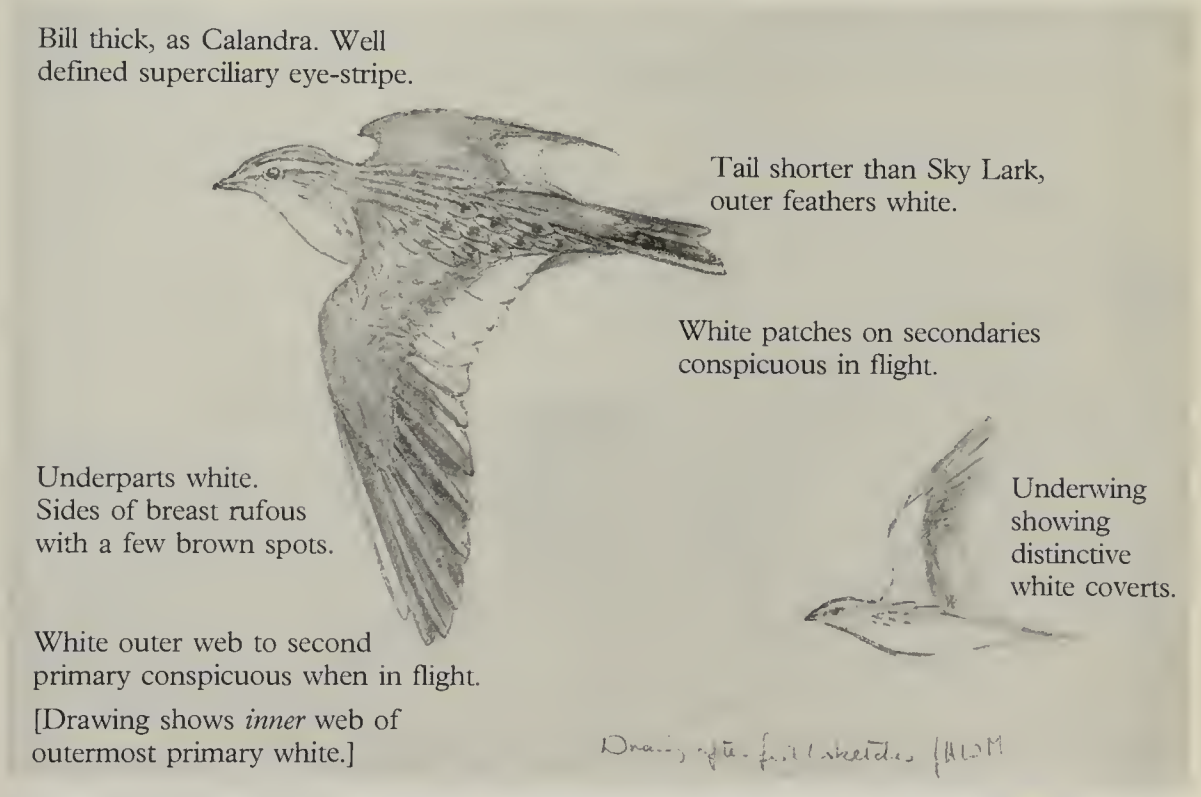


Fig. 1. White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera*, **Norfolk, 24th October 1981** (*J. A. W. Moyes, from field sketches*)

'The bird was under observation by me for about 30 minutes in good light and at a closest range of 10 yards using 10×40B Dialyt binoculars.'

EDITORIAL COMMENT The above accounts constitute the documentary evidence assessed by the two committees.

Although this bird, which stayed for at least three days, was seen only by two observers, it was accepted (by a vote of 9:1) by the BBRC in 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 561). Earlier circulations to the Committee, in 1982 and 1984, had been inconclusive since, at those times, only one member of the Committee had had any field experience of White-winged Lark (by 1986, three members were thoroughly familiar with the species). When reviewed by the BOURC in 1992, it was accepted unanimously (*Ibis* 135: 496; *Brit. Birds* 88: 365-371).

The detailed description of some plumage features compared with the absence of observation of some others created discussion within both committees. For example, although Steve Madge commented 'I found the white outermost primary very difficult to see in the field [in the USSR in June 1992], but perhaps June birds are very worn, making this less evident', and Iain Robertson commented 'The white outer web to the 2nd (outermost) primary was not seen at all in the field [in Kazakhstan in June 1983] and does not show up on any of the slides', Peter Colston had advised the BBRC (*in litt.*, March 1982) that 'The white 2nd primary is often quite conspicuous and would show in the folded wing at rest and probably also in flight.'

Reference

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NOTES

Bill length and bill shape of Semipalmated Sandpiper

It is well known that Semipalmated Sandpipers *Calidris pusilla* and Western Sandpipers *C. mauri* are difficult to separate, particularly when in winter (basic) plumage, in part because of the great variability in bill length of Semipalmated. The range in bill length is, however, even greater than is generally reported. As examples, Cramp & Simmons (1983) gave a range of 16.6-22.8 mm for bill length of Semipalmated Sandpiper, and 21.7-27.8 mm for Western, while Hayman *et al.* (1986) gave a range of 15-23 mm for Semipalmated and 21-30 mm for Western.

During my three years of participation in Manomet Bird Observatory's shorebird research programme, during 1971-73, we banded (ringed) thousands of Semipalmated Sandpipers at Plymouth Beach along the southeastern coast of

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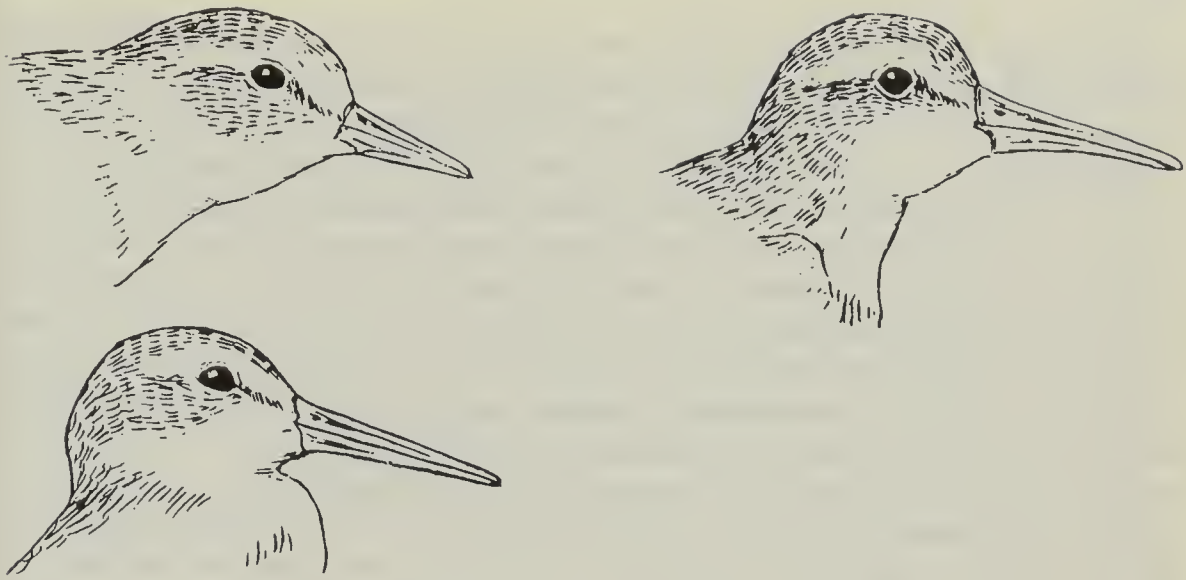


Fig. 1. Extremes of bill length of Semipalmated Sandpipers *Calidris pusilla* **(top two: left, 15.5 mm; right 25 mm) compared with a Western Sandpiper** *C. mauri* **(25 mm).** Traced from photographs of individuals mist-netted in Massachusetts, USA (see text).

Massachusetts. They occur there on passage, mostly during the months of May to October. The bill lengths (exposed culmen) ranged from 15.5 to 25.0 mm. The average bill length was about 20.5 mm, with approximately 1:100 or 1:200 having a bill as long as 25 mm. The line-drawings (fig. 1), traced from photographs of mist-netted birds, illustrate the extremes of bill length that we encountered.

In this same period, we netted only one Western Sandpiper, a juvenile, also shown in fig. 1. As can be seen, a long-billed Semipalmated Sandpiper can on occasion show considerably more decurvature of the bill than a Western Sandpiper with approximately the same bill length.

PAUL K. DONAHUE
PO Box 554, Machias, Maine 04654, USA

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CRAMP, S., & SIMMONS, K. E. L. (eds.) 1983. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic.* vol. 3. Oxford.
HAYMAN, P., MARCHANT, J., & PRATER, T. 1986. *Shorebirds – an identification guide.* London.

EDITORIAL COMMENT Dr R. J. Chandler has commented: 'The bill shape of the Western Sandpiper shown in fig. 1 is not entirely typical of that species, being straighter than is usually the case. It is also worth noting that it has long been recognised that "eastern" Semipalmated Sandpipers can be rather long-billed (see, for examples, *BWP*), and the birds described here were doubtless from this population. This Note is of particular relevance to the rather long-billed Semipalmated Sandpiper that occurred at Felixstowe, Suffolk, in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 545, 609-621; 82: 375-380).'

Orientation of Sky Lark in field

In April-August 1992, during a comparative study of the feeding ecology of the Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* in arable land near Wimborne St Giles, Dorset, and near

Fordingbridge, Hampshire, I located nests by observing the adults' activities. For practical reasons, two or three sticks, each with a yellow tag at the top, were used as reference markers, these being moved several metres every 20-30 minutes in order gradually to encircle the site of a nest. When the sticks' positions were moved as frequently as this, the larks' time of approach before descending to the nest was not affected, nor was it when I approached the nest without moving the stick(s); the larks would usually fly directly to the site of the nest, hover above it for a few seconds, and then descend to deliver food. By contrast, moving the sticks after they had been in the same position for several hours (e.g. overnight) resulted in a much longer approach time: the larks could take 10-35 minutes to find their nest, all the while carrying the same food package in their bill (a similar effect was observed when a grass field was mowed).

The observations showed that the larks used the stick(s) as reference points for the position of the nest in the field, thereby indicating that the Sky Lark is able to recognise features in the field and to use these as markers for orientation. If less-prominent features, such as the colour mosaic (different crop densities, pattern of weeds present) and topographical differences, can also be perceived, remembered and recognised later, this could explain reports that Sky Larks have returned to the same field, and in some cases established territory at the same site, year after year.

John Grynderup Poulsen
Game Conservancy Trust, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 1EF

EDITORIAL COMMENT In contrast, the inability of some species to distinguish between near-identical reference points has been demonstrated by multiple-nest-building behaviour (e.g. by Blackbird *Turdus merula* in a stack of lobster creels, *Brit. Birds* 42: 183-184).

Phylloscopus warbler persistently following Northern Wheatear

On 30th August 1992, at Grune Point, Cumbria, my son Paul and I flushed a Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* from the beach. It flew to perch on a nearby bush, closely followed by a smaller bird which landed about 1 m from it. I was surprised to see through my telescope that the smaller bird was a *Phylloscopus* warbler. For the next two minutes or so, the wheatear flew short distances to other bushes and, once, back to the beach; each time, the warbler followed and landed behind it (even on the beach), remaining constantly at a distance of about 1 m behind. When the wheatear landed in a bush, it always perched at the very top; the warbler would perch within the bush, and it always flew off immediately the wheatear did. On one occasion, the wheatear attempted, unsuccessfully, to drive off the smaller bird. The two finally disappeared near the Point, and on reaching this area we found several Northern Wheatears feeding on a patch of grass and a Chiffchaff *P. collybita* feeding in some bushes, but no sign of any association between them. I cannot be certain that the Chiffchaff was the same bird as we had earlier seen associating with the wheatear, but we found no other *Phylloscopus* warbler in the area.

John Headon
6 Holland Road, Bramhall, Stockport, Cheshire SK7 2PQ

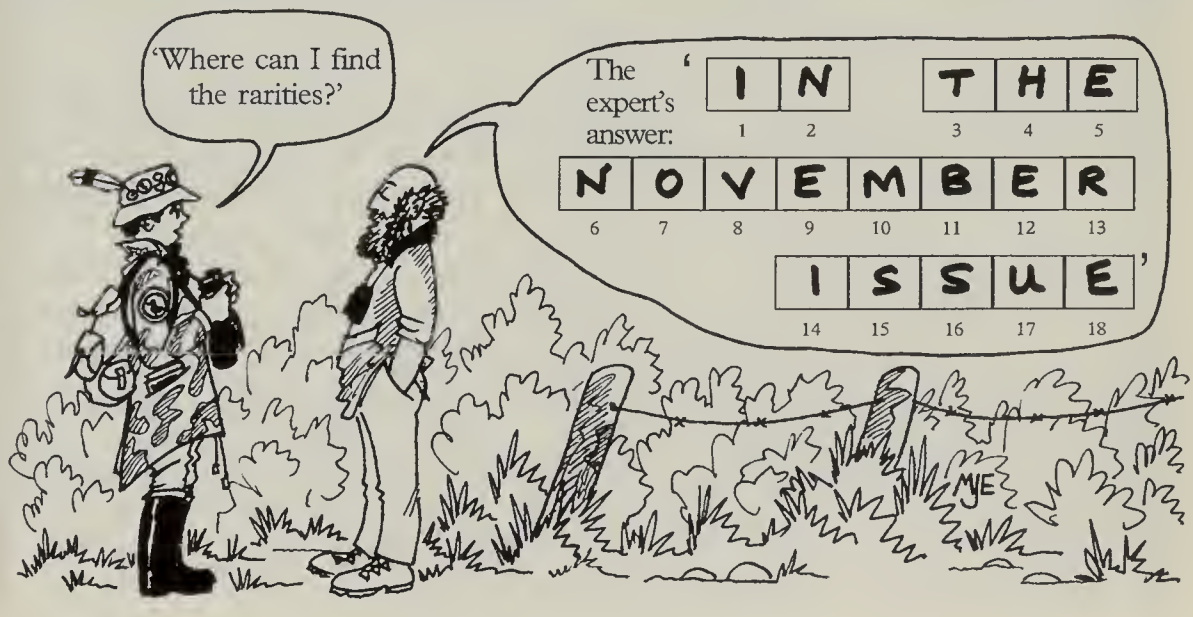
EDITORIAL COMMENT Derek Goodwin has commented: 'Could it be that, in places where cover is scarce (such as desert stopovers on migration), a warbler might be safer if it kept near the only other smallish bird, in this case the wheatear? Four eyes are better than two, and, if a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* or other predator came near, there would be a 50% chance that it would go for the other potential prey.' Previous notes have recorded Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* associating with Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (*Brit. Birds* 68: 196-202; 71: 181-183; 86: 185-186), Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* with Finsch's Wheatear *O. finschii* (*Brit. Birds* 83: 72-73) and with Desert Wheatear *O. deserti* and Spotted Sandgrouse *Pterocles senegallus* (*Sandgrouse* 3: 57), and Northern Wheatear with Corn Crake *Crex crex* (*Brit. Birds* 88: 297). While at least some of these instances involved feeding associations, whereby one bird took advantage of food disturbed by the other's activities, P. A. Amies (*Brit. Birds* 83: 72-73) suggested that in some cases a species may benefit from the greater vigilance of the other (which would give warning of any approaching predator), a view put forward earlier by Dr C. J. Bibby (*Brit. Birds* 71: 183) and expanded upon (above) by Derek Goodwin.

'The Famous Grouse' Scotch whisky Christmas puzzle: the solution

The Christmas 1995 puzzle (page xi in December's issue) attracted the greatest-ever number of entries.

The answers to the five questions were: 1. BRAMBLING (a 'b-rambling' finch, not an 'a-hopping' finch). 2. TWITCHES ('itch' inside an anagram of west). 3. SANDGROUSE (minus sand plus famous gives Famous Grouse; Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes paradoxus* has bred in Britain). 4. ROLLER. 5. VIREOS (anagram of souvenirs minus sun). Transferring the appropriate letters gave the expert's answer.

The three winners, whose entries were drawn from all the postcards received, are Jorg Hadasch (Herford, Germany), John Jones (Yelverton, Devon) and C. D. Taylor (Crowthorne, Berkshire), each of whom will receive a bottle of *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky.



LETTERS

Summer feeding of garden birds

In October 'News and comment' (*Brit. Birds* 88: 489), Shelley Hinsley's letter in the *New Scientist* about feeding peanuts in the summer was quoted. Readers may feel that this reference indicated the wholesale death of nestling tits *Parus* nationwide through choking on peanuts. In fact, the letter reported three dead chicks dissected which had a gut blockage caused by peanuts. These three birds had caterpillars spilling out of their beaks which had been fed to them *after* the peanut pieces.

I think that the feeding regime of tits, and other birds, is so well controlled that it is almost inconceivable that a parent bird will feed its offspring unsuitable food, *if suitable food is available.* After all, the male feeds the female snail shells to help her calcium intake whilst she is laying the clutch. In the case of these chicks, I would imagine that the caterpillars were in short supply when the peanut pieces were fed to them—possibly following heavy rain, when insect larvae are washed from the trees. It takes them about 48 hours to regain their position on the leaves and, through this period, the tits may have had to resort to peanuts.

Shelley Hinsley suggested that people should feed other, softer foods during the summer and not peanuts, even behind wire mesh. This was because squirrel damage to feeders might allow big lumps to be extracted. She did *not* suggest that summer feeding was not a good thing. I am sure that it is, as the garden environment is not an ideal habitat for birds. Often there is a dearth of native plants, particularly the forest trees that tits have evolved to depend upon. Even the garden flowers and vegetables may be kept free of insects by the use of pesticides, and they are often removed before setting seed.

Summer feeding serves to redress the balance and can be very useful for the birds. In my own garden, peanuts are taken by the adult tits, from behind secure mesh, all through the breeding season. Late nestlings (from about day 10) seem to be fed a few pieces, but the birds are able to find food from the native trees in the garden to make up the majority of their food. Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris* and Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* flock to take the black sunflower seeds from hanging feeders (and from underneath them) through the whole summer. The young Greenfinches seem to be brought to the feeders up to a fortnight earlier than the time at which the literature suggests they should have fledged.

The data from ringing show a peak in recoveries during the spring and early summer. Indeed, April and May are obviously months of low food supply, as the insects are not yet breeding and no new plant seed is yet available. Far from a safer message being 'Do not feed birds during the breeding season', it should be 'If you feed the birds during the winter, continue through spring and into summer—rather than abandoning them just when they have the new generation to bring up.'

Chris Mead
The Nunnery, Hilborough, Thetford, Norfolk IP26 5BW

[*Brit. Birds* 89: 238-240, May 1996] © British Birds Ltd 1996

Summer feeding of garden birds

I feed the birds in my garden throughout the year, replenishing up to three times daily, exclusively with sunflower seeds, and a fat supplement in winter. So far as tits *Parus* are concerned, many visit the feeding stations, but these visits stop completely once breeding starts, recommencing after the young have fledged, when the juveniles as well as adults enjoy the seeds.

Patrick Nash
Niederrheinstr. 7, 40474 Düsseldorf, Germany

Summer feeding of garden birds

The debate about whether to feed birds during the breeding season continues (*Brit. Birds* 88: 489). Some nestling tits *Parus* choke to death on peanuts (although there is no correlation with the amount of artificial food fed to a brood and nestling mortality: Cowie & Hinsley 1988a). Artificial feeding could also harm birds if it increased their risk of predation, parasitism or disease, as might be expected if a feeder attracted birds to the same site over a long period. A recent study concluded, however, that feeders did 'not appear to expose birds to a higher risk of predation' (Dunn & Tessaglia 1994). It remains unclear whether the number of birds killed by summer feeding exceeds the number surviving because of it.

The benefits of summer feeding to Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris* seem to be substantial. We studied Greenfinches nesting on the University of Sussex campus during 1988-90 (Eley 1991). Sunflower seeds (with peanuts and hemp in 1988) were provided daily in plastic seed trays, placed on the ground at one (1990) or three sites (1988-89). Greenfinches often nested close to the feeders. In 1989, we moved the trays distances of 280-490 m, at seven-week intervals, and many individuals followed these movements. For example, the females paired with 11 colour-ringed males always built their nests within 100 m of an active feeder (mean distance per male used if more than one nest per seven-week period).

Nestlings hatching within 100 m of a feeder were heavier at five or six days than those hatching farther away.[1] Heavy broods were more likely to produce recruits into the local breeding population.[2] The diet of nestling Greenfinches can be inspected through the translucent crop wall (Newton 1972; for agreement with analysis of faeces from the same chick, see Eley 1991). Very few broods (4%, n = 71), and only four chicks, had sunflower seeds in their crops when weighed. We never saw peanuts in the crops of chicks less than 12 days old. Sampling of older chicks suggested that sunflower seeds were regularly fed to chicks only when they were more than ten days old (100% of eight broods). The impact of artificial feeding on chick weight, therefore, seems to have acted indirectly via their parents' ability to collect natural foods.

Our Greenfinches were regularly polygynous (24% of 769 nests; details in Cramp & Perrins 1994). The nests of polygynous males were significantly closer to feeders than those of monogamous males.[3] Indeed, over half (55%, n = 183)

1. Mean chick weight for close broods = 13.8 g, n = 55; mean for distant broods = 12.2 g, n = 69; Mann-Whitney test, $P < 0.001$.
2. Spearman rank correlation between brood weight and proportion of brood recruited: r = +0.336, n = 124, $P < 0.001$.
3. Mean distance was used if male had more than one nest: mean for polygyny = 95 m, n = 34; mean for monogamy = 235 m, n = 200; Mann-Whitney tests for each year, $P < 0.05$.

of the nests involving polygyny were within 100 m of a feeder, although some were at least 1.3 km away. Since the number of young fledged per nest was only slightly lower for polygynous males,[4] it is likely that polygynous males benefited substantially from the provision of extra food.

Other studies have shown that artificial feeding during the breeding season can advance laying date (e.g. Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus*: Svensson & Nilsson 1995), increase clutch size (e.g. Magpies *Pica pica*: Högstedt 1981) and increase the number of young fledged (e.g. Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*: Richner 1992). These benefits seem to be better documented than fears about the costs of artificial feeding, tragic though these may be in individual circumstances.

Many householders feed birds during the summer (52% in a survey by Cowie & Hinsley 1988b), and it would seem naive to try to prevent them (as suggested in *Brit. Birds* 88: 489). A simple rule to prevent nestlings choking to death on peanuts, and which avoids all ambiguity about when peanuts are dangerous, is 'Never feed loose peanuts'.

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Aberrant song of Common Whitethroat

M. Tulloch and F. J. Roberts (*Brit. Birds* 88: 425) asked whether aberrant songs of Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* are innate or learned. On 25th April 1948, in Bruern Woods, Oxfordshire, I heard one singing a longer song than usual, the latter part of which was similar to that of a Garden Warbler *S. borin*, one of which was singing nearby. I also heard a Common Whitethroat with a similar song not far off later in the day. The examples cited in *BWP* show that some, perhaps most, of the aberrant songs of the species are mimetic. It is of some interest, however, that the majority of these phrases incorporated into normal song appear to be mimicked from other *Sylvia* species.

Richard S. R. Fitter
Drifts, Chinnor Hill, Chinnor, Oxfordshire OX9 4BS

4. 3.21, n = 14 males, compared with 3.88, n = 55 monogamous males; Mann-Whitney test, $P < 0.05$.



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott
Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Of partridges, pheasants and White-headed Ducks

Whatever your views may be on the ethics of releasing birds for shooting, it is an extremely widespread practice that has implications for the avifauna of widely dispersed geographical areas. We have heard it claimed that, with the UK population of Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* having suffered a decline of some 82% in the last 25 years, the rearing and release of the species will assist the declining 'stocks'. Regrettably, this course of action takes no account of the reasons for the decline.

Rearing and releasing of a range of game-bird species have had an adverse effect in several areas. It is now illegal to release Chukar Partridges *Alectoris chukar* or Chukar hybrids in the UK, but the damage may well have been done. There must be plenty of birders who have stared at Red-legged Partridges *A. rufa* and wondered. Are the lores white? Is the breast streaked and, if so, how much? Just how close are the flank bars? It is still possible to find pure Red-legged Partridges in the UK—although, of course, they also were introduced here, originally in the late 1700s. News has just reached us from Spain, where the species is indigenous, that, as a result of Chukar Partridge releases, there are now no pure Red-legged Partridges left in Spain. The result is that two quite distinct geographical races, *A. r. hispanica* (northern Spain and Portugal) and *A. r. intercedens* (southern Spain), have been lost forever. A unique genetic resource and a little more European biodiversity lost.

But this is not the end of the Spanish part of the story. The Grey Partridge has also been released quite widely in Spain and, once more, a unique subspecies has disappeared. *P. p. hispaniensis* was confined to the Pyrénées and Cantabrian mountains. Augmentation of the population by 'stock' from elsewhere in Europe has resulted in the complete elimination of *hispaniensis*.

On a recent visit to Italy, we were impressed with how every male Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* appeared to be identical—all supporting a bright clean white neck ring and apparently of the race *torquatus*. If releases are continuing in the Emilia Romagna region, there appears to be little evidence of genetic mixing—unlike the poor old UK, where your guess is as good as ours as to just which subspecies of Common Pheasant is on the daily checklist. What a pity that Man insists on interfering.

It is perhaps ironic that two subspecies, unique genetic resources, have been lost in Spain in recent years without a murmur from the conservation movement. Yet now we are investing many thousands of pounds in what may prove to be a futile attempt to save the White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*—a population that is not unique—in the same country.

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British Birdwatching Fair 1996

The proceeds from this year's British Birdwatching Fair will be going to support a BirdLife International project in Vietnam, where it is hoped to establish the Ke Go Nature Reserve, an area covering 24,800 ha in the Annamese lowlands of central Vietnam. A biodiversity hotspot, it forms part of the largest remaining area of broad-leaved evergreen forest in the country. First and foremost, it is home to the critically endangered Vietnamese Pheasant *Lophura hatinhensis*, which was discovered only in 1964 and about which little is known. In addition, the reserve hosts 270 bird species, ten of which are globally threatened, 47 mammal species, including Crested Gibbons *Hylobates concolor* and the recently described Giant Muntjac *Megamuntiacus vuquanghensis*, and 567 species of plants. This diversity of life is one of the reasons why Ke Go was selected for this year's project.

The 1996 Fair will take place at Rutland Water on 16th-18th August. Do support it if you can.

First EOU meeting postponed

The First Meeting of the European Ornithological Union, planned for Bologna in August 1996, has been postponed to August 1997. For details, apply to Dr Fernando Spina, Organising Secretary, Istituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvatica, Via Ca' Fornacetta 9, 40064 Ozzano Emilia (BO), Italia (tel. +39 51 65 12 111; fax +39 51 79 66 28).

Contributions for BOU Conference

The BOU Autumn Conference 1997 (to be held in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Office of the RSPB) will take place in the peace and tranquillity of Stranmillis College in suburban south Belfast during 5th-6th September, on the topic of 'Birds: their science and conservation'. If you have something interesting to contribute, either as a talk or as a poster, please contact the conference organiser: Dr Julian G. Greenwood, Science Department, Stranmillis College, Belfast, BT9 5DY; tel: 01232 384264; fax: 01232 664423.

Birds of Algeria

An annotated check-list of the birds of Algeria is nearing completion. Anyone with important unpublished data on the birds of this country is invited to send them to the French co-author. (*Paul Isenmann, CEFE/CNRS, BP 5051, F-34033 Montpellier, France; Aïssa Moali, Institut de Biologie, Université, DZ-15000 Tizi Ouzou, Algeria*)

Cyprus Breeding Atlas

A breeding-bird atlas project has started in Cyprus. Anyone interested in obtaining the record sheet with instructions or more information on the project should contact David Whaley and Judy Dawes, Armou, Paphos 8522, Cyprus; phone 06 249788; fax 06 249787.

Bursaries for young wildlife artists

The Bursary Scheme, run by Lloyds Private Banking in conjunction with the Society of Wildlife Artists, was established in 1993. It encourages young artists aged between 15 and 25 by financing a drawing or painting project, training or field trip. The 1995 award winners were Karen Dobbs of the West Midlands (23), Lauren Dorman of London (23), Jacqueline King of London (21), Richard Pitman of Avon (24), and Nik Pollard of Kent (24).

Five bursaries will again be awarded in 1996 and each award can be up to £500. The 1996 Bursary winners will see their work displayed at the Society of Wildlife Artists Exhibition in 1997.

Application forms are available from the Society of Wildlife Artists, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5BD. The closing date for 1996 entries is 7th June 1996.

Of bypasses and SSSIs

It all seems ironic that, at the time of writing, the battle over the Newbury bypass continues and Sites of Special Scientific Interest are threatened with at best damage and at worst total loss. They are presumably owned by private individuals who are happy to see this course of events, or perhaps there has been some compulsory purchase? It does not really matter, but we have heard of at least one case elsewhere in the country where a highways authority has spent considerable sums of money diverting a motorway link road around a piece of land owned by a national conservation organisation—even though the land was of no conservation importance. It would appear that ownership by the right body is more important in the eye of the developer than the wildlife value of the land.

HarperCollins a winner

The highly respected annual Natural World Book of the Year Award has been won by *European Mammals: evolution and behaviour* by David Macdonald, published by HarperCollins at £14.99. Judges' quotes in the winter issue of The Wildlife Trusts' magazine *Natural World* included 'The best book I've read since becoming involved in the competition' and 'Inspirational writing'.

Runners-up, all 'Highly commended', were *Collins Pocket Guide: Birds of Britain and Europe* by Hermann Heinzel, Richard Fitter & John Parslow (another HarperCollins, price £9.99, reviewed in *Brit. Birds* 88: 373), *Collins Field Guide: Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe* by Michael Roberts (a third HarperCollins success, price £14.99), *Portrait of Wildlife on a Hill Farm* by Anne McBride & Tony Pearce, illustrated by Darren Rees (published by Whittet at £25.00, reviewed in *Brit. Birds* 88: 566) and *Forest and Woodland Trees in Britain* by John White (published by OUP at £19.99).

Wherever you live in the UK, there is a Wildlife Trust near you. Membership is £16 p.a. (cheques to RSNC). To join or for more information, write to the Wildlife Trusts, Witham Park, Waterside South, Lincoln LN5 7JR.

HarperCollins prize for young photographer

The famous natural-history publisher *HarperCollins,* former co-sponsor of Bird Photograph of the Year, has continued to provide book prizes worth £25 for each of the top three BPY photographers.

This year, *HarperCollins* will also donate a prize of £100-worth of *HarperCollins* bird books for the top-placed photographer aged under 22 years.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust Annual Review

The *Annual Review 1994-1995* of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust has recently been published. While being an overview of its work and reserve management for all wildlife, it is inevitable in such a bird-rich county, with reserves bearing such legendary names as Cley Marshes, Scolt Head and Holme Dunes, that much of the information relates to the feathered department. Thus, we read of the first breeding record in the Cley reedbed of Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus*, while tree-felling on 25 acres (10 ha) of neglected heath at East Wretham benefited such species as Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*, European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe.* But it is also excellent to hear that a project at Thompson Common has been completed to prevent the disappearance of the Scarce Emerald Damselfly *Lestes dryas*, once thought to be extinct in Britain, but rediscovered in 1983 and now surviving at only a handful of UK sites. A map on the back cover shows the location of reserves, though for non-Norfolk residents who might visit the county occasionally the addition of a few key place-names would have been helpful, as would the address of the Trust office to which to write for copies of the Review or further information (tel. 01603-615544).

Hat-trick for 'BBC Wildlife'

For the third year running, the magazine *BBC Wildlife* has won the British Environment and Media Award for 'Best Environmental Coverage' in the general interest, current affairs and women's magazines category.

As time goes by, the 'BBC' on the cover gets smaller, but *BBC Wildlife* itself seems to get better and better. The latest issue to hand (vol. 14, no. 2) includes one of the most artistic wildlife photographs we can recall (a New Zealand Fur Seal *Arctocephalus forsteri* passing through curving seaweed fronds, photographed by Andris Apse) and news stories ranging from the amazing discovery of a completely new phylum of animals, the Cycliophora, originally reported in *Nature* (378: 711-714), to vital conservation matters such as the current pro versus anti raptor-control debate (the anti side eloquently argued by our own Mike Everett) and the pseudoscientific whaling by Japan.

BBC Wildlife is on the bookstalls at £2.30; back issues are £2.50 (or £3.25 overseas); annual subscriptions are £28 in the UK (or £32 Europe; £35 rest of the world; $56 USA) from PO Box 425, Woking, Surrey GU21 1GP.

The millionth NRC approaches

We held the belief that the old field skills of nest-finding were becoming a thing of the past, but the latest news from the BTO Nest Record Scheme shows otherwise.

Well over 30,000 cards were completed in 1994, the grand total now approaching the magical one million figure; there were over 250 cards for Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, over 2,000 cards for Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*, and many, many more. Regrettably, the number of cards completed for some key species has fallen to a critically low level, and this may result in the BTO having some difficulty in monitoring the 'health' of these species. The BTO has set itself a target of 100 multi-visit cards for these species. Can you help?

The 'target species' are: Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Blackcap *S. atricapilla*, Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, Chiffchaff *P. collybita*, Common Raven *Corvus corax*, Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, Reed Bunting *E. schoeniclus*, and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*.

Further details of the Nest Record Scheme are available from BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

STOP PRESS We hear that the 1,000,000th card has arrived! More details later.

'The Bedfordshire Naturalist'

The latest edition of *The Bedfordshire Naturalist* made its appearance early in the year, comprising two parts. The first—the Journal for the year 1994—contains mainly reports of the non-ornithological recorders, and it is wonderful to see such a diversity of recording of some of the more obscure branches of natural history such as fish, crayfish and lacewings, to name but a few. The second part is the Bedfordshire Bird Report for 1994. The Bedfordshire Bird Club was formed in 1993 and is one of the youngest and fastest-growing of the ornithological groups in the country. The Management Committee's report indicates the level of involvement of the Club, including being twinned with the New Haven Bird Club in Connecticut, New England. The report includes the systematic list, a review of Dunstable Sewage Treatment Works (well visited to see the Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* in 1991), a county bird list, and a fascinating article entitled 'Ring Ouzels [*Turdus torquatus*]: where from, where to, why here?' by Bernard Nau.

Copies of *The Bedfordshire Naturalist*, Part 2 (price £3.00 + p&p), are obtainable from Dave Odell, 74 The Links, Kempston, Bedford MK42 7LT.

Butterflies for the New Millennium

Butterfly Conservation has launched an ambitious project to produce a new *Atlas of Butterflies of Britain and Ireland* for the year 2000, in conjunction with the Biological Records Centre.

So, if, when you are out birdwatching, particularly in some remote part of the country, you come across some butterflies, do make a note of your record—it could just help fill in a missing piece of the butterfly jigsaw.

Further details can be obtained from Butterfly Conservation, PO Box 22, Dedham, Colchester, Essex CO7 6EY.

Northampton Report

From its stylish front cover through its readable systematic list, the *Northamptonshire Bird Report 1995* (covering 1994 records) shows attention to attractive design as well as to comprehensive content. Not only does the *Report* include a section on 'Escapes and Ferals', but — a real sign of the times — it also has an official 'Adviser on Escapes & Ferals' (K. Blackwell FZS, MBOU) listed with the Editorial Committee. Technical printing problems delayed its appearance by five weeks, so it missed this year's judging for the Annual Bird Report Awards, but copies of the *Report* can now be obtained (price £4.00) from Robert W. Bullock, 81 Cavendish Drive, Northampton NN3 3HL.

Code of conduct for birdwatchers

It is perhaps timely to remind readers of the 'Code of conduct for birdwatchers', a joint publication drafted as a result of consultation between the BOU, the BTO, the RSPB, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust and the editors of *British Birds*. Several stories have come to our attention in recent months that range from undue disturbance of birds, lack of respect for landowners and suppressing records to possible disturbance of nesting birds. May we take this opportunity of reminding all our readers of the ten key points of the code:

1. The welfare of the birds must come first.
2. Habitats must be protected.
3. Keep disturbance to birds and their habitats to a minimum.
4. When you find a rare bird, think carefully about whom you should tell.
5. Do not harass rare migrants.
6. Abide by the bird-protection laws at all times.
7. Respect the rights of landowners.
8. Respect the rights of other people in the countryside.
9. Make your records available to the local bird recorder.
10. Behave abroad as you would when birdwatching at home.

A leaflet with full details of the code is available from the RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Is twitching going wrong?

Professional twitcher Lee Evans feels that hi-tech advances in bird-pager systems are spelling the demise of 'traditional' twitching. As one who helped launch the first bird information telephone service in 1986, and founder of the UK400 club, Lee claims that today too many younger rare-bird enthusiasts are simply sitting at home waiting for the telephone to ring. 'My hope was pagers and mobile phones would encourage people out into the field more, but it's had the opposite effect—a lot just sit at home waiting to be bleeped', he said. Many would also echo his comment that these days you meet people who have little idea about common birds and no interest in learning. Sure it's great to go out and find your own rarity, maybe even have the kudos of your initials appearing alongside an accepted mega-rarity, but, if there is any pleasure in it at all, surely that comes from groundwork with more common birds? Is it significant that the term 'birdwatcher' seems to be being replaced—in some quarters—by 'birder'?

Mersey Estuary promoted

The Mersey Estuary has at last been designated as a Special Protection Area under the European Union Birds Directive and as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. In this, the Government has broken a record not to be proud of: it has taken ten years to reach agreement on the international importance of the Mersey Estuary and has therefore taken longer to promote it than it has for any other UK site. (*habitat* vol. 32, no. 1, January 1996)

New Recorders

Shaun Robson, 5 Pine Road, Corfe Mullen, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 3DW, has taken over from Martin Cade as Recorder for Dorset.

Richard E. Harbird, Flat 4, Buckley Court, 16 Woodfield Road, Moseley, Birmingham B13 9UJ, has taken over from Steve Whitehouse as Recorder for Worcestershire.

Steve Cooper, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Eastpark, Caerlaverock, Dumfries DG1 4RS, has taken over from Ken Bruce as Recorder for Dumfries & Galloway (Nithsdale, Annandale & Eskdale).

R. E. Youngman, Atholl Bank, 20 East Moulin Road, Pitlochry PH16 5HY, has taken over from Wendy Mattingley as Recorder for Tayside (Perth & Kinross).

Mike Nicholl, 1 Banknowe Grove, Tayport DD6 9LH, has taken over from Allan Burnett as Recorder for Tayside (Angus, City of Dundee).

Changes of Recorders' addresses

Steve Haynes, Recorder for Warwickshire, has moved to 4 Spinney Close, Old Arley, Coventry CV7 8PD.

Dr C. J. Henty, Recorder for Central (Clackmannan, Falkirk, Stirling), has moved to Wellwood, 2 Mine Road, Bridge of Allan, Stirlingshire FK9 4LA.

M. F. Peers, Recorder for Powys (Breconshire), has moved to Cyffylog, 2 Aberyscir Road, Cradoc, Brecon, Powys LD3 9BP.

Chris Jones, Recorder for Gwent, has moved to 22 Walnut Drive, Caerleon, Newport, Gwent NP6 1SB.

'Welsh Birds'

The second issue of *Welsh Birds* vol. 1 has just been produced by the Welsh Ornithological Society (WOS). Edited by Mike Shrubb and sponsored by *Chevron* and by Subbuteo Natural History Books, this second issue of the new series includes the Welsh Bird Report for 1994, a report on bird-ringing, and a paper by Peter Dare on the breeding success and territory features of Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* in North Wales. It is available (price £4.00) from Mike Shrubb, Hillcrest, Llanwrtyd Wells, Powys LD5 4TL. (*Contributed by Stephanie Tyler*)

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Dave Allen—*Northern Ireland*
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David Clugston—*Scotland*
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Frank Gribble—*Midlands*
Barrie Harding—*East Anglia*
Oran O'Sullivan—*Republic of Ireland*
Don Taylor—*Southeast*
Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*
John Wilson—*Northwest*



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 18th March to 15th April 1996. These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Blyth Estuary (Northumberland), 20th March to 8th April.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Tittenhanger Gravel-pits (Hertfordshire), 7th-11th April.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* Two near Girvan (Strathclyde), 13th-15th April.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* Grey-phase individual, Bann Estuary (Co. Londonderry), 23rd March; Bude (Cornwall), 9th April and, nearby, 13th April.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Sennen (Cornwall), 2nd-10th April.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* First-winter, Cloughey Bay (Co. Down), 24th-31st March; near Warrington (Cheshire), 11th-13th April.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* One, with Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis*, Dungarvan (Co. Waterford), 9th April.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* Ardnamurchan Peninsula (Highland), 27th March.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* Lamorna (Cornwall), 21st April to 2nd March; near Weymouth (Dorset), 11th-12th April; near St Ives (Cornwall), 12th April.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus* Second to fourth records for Ireland of Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis*, at St John's Point (Co. Down), Groomsport (Co. Down) and Blackrock (Co. Kerry) in late March and early April (first was as long ago as 1961).

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* Individual wintering at Blackrock to at least 12th April (first record for western Ireland).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* Sheringham (Norfolk), 27th March to 1st April.

Little Bunting *E. pusilla* Chew Valley Lake (Avon), 31st March to 1st April; Nanquidno (Cornwall), 24th March; Sidlesham Ferry (West Sussex), 23rd March to 4th April.

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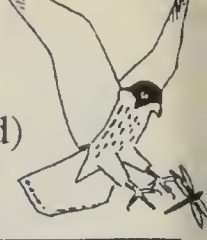
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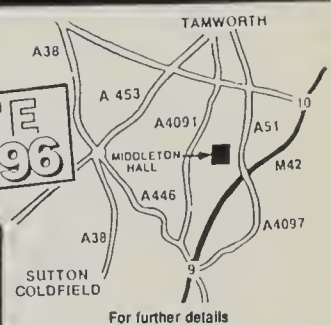
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★ HANNINGFIELD RESERVOIR, Essex (off A130 North of Basildon) **Sunday 9th June** (near the fishing lodge).

★ ALTON WATER, near Ipswich on the B1080 Holbrook/Sutton road on **Saturday 31st August.**

★ RECULVER COUNTRY PARK (KTNC), 3 miles east of Herne Bay. Access from A299 (Thanet Way) through Hillborough. In the Interpretation Centre on **Saturday 25th May and Sunday 21st July.**



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EUROPEAN NEWS

All records have been accepted by the relevant national rarities committee, unless marked by an asterisk(*).

Records are included only if they have been sent by the official national representative, each of whom is listed at the end of this report, or have been published in the relevant national journal (these sources are always acknowledged).

As well as covering the whole of Europe, records notified by the national representatives for adjacent countries within the Western Palearctic are also included.

This thirty-ninth six-monthly collation includes officially notified reports from the record total of 39 countries.

These summaries aim to include *all* records of: (1) significant breeding-range expansions or contractions; (2) major irruptions of erupting species; (3) Asiatic vagrants; (4) Nearctic species (excluding ducks, waders and gulls in Great Britain and Ireland, where they are regular); (5) other extralimital vagrants; and (6) major national rarities, including the first five national records even if the species is common elsewhere in Europe.

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to nationally accepted records of single individuals.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*
BELARUS First wintering: one in Minsk from November 1995 to mid February 1996.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*
DENMARK Wintering and passage: second-best year ever, with 22 in 1993 (four in January-February, 13 in April-May and five in September-November), compared with peak of 35 in 1991 (*DOFT* 89: 147).
SWITZERLAND Second and third records: 24th January to 9th March 1982 and 12th December 1994 to 28th February 1995 (*Orn. Beob.* 92: 459-462, 464).

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*
FRANCE First record: 17th October 1985 (not 18th October as previously noted; *Ornithos* 2: 146).

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*
FRANCE Fourth record: immature on 6th November 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 146).

Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*
NORWAY First record: adult showing characters of the race *chlororhynchos* at sea about 20 nautical miles northwest of Halten lighthouse, Sor-Trøndelag, on 13th April 1994 (first confirmed record for the Western Palearctic).

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*
NETHERLANDS First record: Westplaat, Zuid-Holland, on 21st August 1995.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Third record for Guernsey: at least 30 off Chouet on 8th September 1995 (previous records were flocks in July 1950 and September 1959). First record for Jersey: four off Grosnez Point on 8th September 1995.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*
LATVIA Third record: Pape seacoast, Liepaja, on 13th November 1995* (previous records were in October 1981 and June 1994).

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*
FRANCE Vagrants: four between Cap Gris-Nez and Ouessant during 25th-27th September

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1995*.
CHANNEL ISLANDS First record for Jersey: 9th May 1994 (*Ann. Bull. Soc. Jersiaise* 26: 321).

European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*
DENMARK Absence: none reported in 1993 (the poorest year during 1977-92 was 1981, with one record; *DOFT* 89: 148).
SPAIN Population estimate for northern coast: more than 1,320 breeding pairs in 29 colonies (*Alauda* 63: 299-305).

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*
ITALY First record: Genova on 11th August 1991 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 65).

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*
SPAIN Vagrants: two mist-netted at cabo Silleiro, Pontevedra, on 3rd and 30th July 1994*.

Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxii*
FRANCE Presumed escape: adult on 16th August 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 167).

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*
FRANCE First breeding record on Mediterranean coast: pair with one egg on pier in harbour near Marseille, Bouches-du-Rhône.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
SWEDEN Increasing: about 15,200 pairs in 1994, despite intense legal and illegal persecution (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 72).

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*
BULGARIA Increased wintering and expansion of winter range: 1,015 at Gorni Dabnik Reservoir, Pleven region, on 19th January 1996, and 1,800-2,000 at Maritza River, near Dimitrovgrad, in January 1996.
POLAND Second record this century: two at Włocławek Reservoir on Vistula River on 23rd-24th December 1994 (record in April 1995, *Brit. Birds* 89: 26, becomes third).
UKRAINE Census: 1,720 wintering on northwestern coast of Black Sea during December 1995 to February 1996.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*
DENMARK Population stabilised: about 104 booming males in 1993, following large increases in recent years (*DOFT* 89: 149).

Green Heron *Butorides virescens*
FRANCE First record: 1st April 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 147).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
FRANCE Increasing numbers outside Southern France: up to 860 in roost at Saint-Just-Luzac, Charente-Maritime, on 21st August 1995*.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Record numbers for Guernsey: at least 25 in October 1995. Record numbers for Jersey: 147 at Longueville Marsh on 4th October 1995 (regularly recorded since 3rd August 1989, when three were noted).
FRANCE Continuing increase: 9,860 in three roosts in Charente-Maritime at end of August 1995.
ICELAND Fourth record: 4th-15th June 1994 (*Bliki* 16: 16).

Great White Egret *Egretta alba*
DENMARK Vagrants: five or six records in 1993 (previous best year 1988, with six individuals; *DOFT* 89: 149).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
GREAT BRITAIN Census data: the BTO's Heronries Census estimated over 6,600 nests in England and Wales in 1994, the highest figure since recording began in 1928 (*BTO News* 201: 8).

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*
DENMARK Decrease: only 10-11 on passage in 1993, the lowest numbers since systematic recording began in 1977 (previous poorest year 1990, with 14; 1977-92 average 22; *DOFT* 89: 149).

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*
BULGARIA Census: about 4,000 breeding pairs in 1994/95* (about 1,000 pairs fewer than in 1984 census).
DENMARK Breeding decline: further reduction to only seven pairs and two individuals in 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 150); only five breeding pairs in 1995.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*
CANARY ISLANDS Third to fifth records: Tenerife in September 1991, Gran Canaria in October 1995 and Tenerife in November 1995.
ESTONIA Fourth record: adult in Haapsalu, Lääne District, on 10th September 1995.

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*
CANARY ISLANDS Second record: two on Fuerteventura in October 1995* (although natural origin is not totally rejected, possibly escaped from a zoological centre on Lanzarote).

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*
DENMARK Low numbers: only one in 1993, the poorest year since none in 1988 (3-12 on passage annually during 1989-92; *DOFT* 89: 151).

MOROCCO Second and third breeding records: pair bred in 1994 and two in 1995 in colony of Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* north of Tétouan (previous breeding record was also in Tangier Peninsula, in 1967).

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*
MACEDONIA First record: about 100 near Asamati, in Nature Reserve Ezerani on Prespa Lake, on 9th September 1995.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*
CROATIA Census: breeding population in northwest Croatia was about 20 pairs in 1995.
FAROE ISLANDS First record: 12 at Trongisvágur from about 25th May to 22nd June 1995 (previous records all related to introductions, the most recent being in the early 1960s).
UKRAINE Census: 6,400 wintering on northwestern coast of Black Sea during December 1995 to February 1996.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*
LATVIA Breeding increase: up to about 25-30 pairs in 1992 (*Putni daba* 2: 95-97).
UKRAINE Census: 1,810 wintering on northwestern coast of Black Sea during December 1995 to February 1996.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*
DENMARK Passage: six present in both spring and autumn 1993 in N-Jutland, where has occurred regularly over the last five years (thought to oversummer in Oslo Fjord; *DOFT* 89: 150).

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*
SWEDEN First record: Ottenby on 21st October 1995* (but possibly an escape).

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*
DENMARK Very high passage numbers: in 1993, largest spring flock 11,780 over Sjaelland on 16th April; record numbers in autumn, including total of 25,000 on 28th September and, at Blåvand on 29th, 11,668, with flock of 19,900 on ground on 2nd October (*DOFT* 89: 151-152).
SWEDEN Increasing: almost 2,400 pairs bred in 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 77-78).

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*
DENMARK High passage numbers: about 30,000 past Sjaelland in spring 1993; exceptional autumn passage included over 40,000 on 28th September 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 152).
NETHERLANDS Influx of the race *hrota*: largest-ever, with unprecedented high numbers (more than 475) and many inland records during January-February 1996.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*
CANARY ISLANDS First records and first breeding: at same location on Fuerteventura; female in April 1994*, pair with six to seven young in May 1994* and pair in October 1995*.
MALTA Vagrant: 29th November to 1st December 1995 (seven previous records).
SWEDEN Unique irruption: at least 50 individuals in 1994 (117 previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 80-81).

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*
ICELAND Fourth breeding record: pair bred in 1994 in Borgarfjörður, presumably the same as in 1993 (*Bliki* 16: 19).

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*
ICELAND Fourth record: adult male on 8th-16th October 1994 (*Bliki* 16: 19).

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*
ICELAND Fifth record: male on 8th-9th May 1994 (origin of all five most likely to be Britain; *Bliki* 16: 19).

American Wigeon *Anas americana*
ICELAND Vagrants: three records in 1994 (78 previous records: *Bliki* 16: 19).
MOROCCO Fourth record: adult male at Lake of Merzouga (an intermittent wetland in desert 550 km from Atlantic coast) on 30th December 1995*.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*
FRANCE Vagrants of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: January to 23rd March 1991 and two on 24th October 1992, one staying until 8th November (*Ornithos* 2: 148); male at étang du Moulin-Neuf, Finistère, on 10th-16th December 1995*.
ICELAND Vagrant of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: male on 15th May 1994 (43 previous records; *Bliki* 16: 19).
NORWAY Vagrants of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: Rogaland on 16th April and 1st-4th May 1989; individual on 25th-26th April (*Brit. Birds* 87: 3) also present on 5th May 1991; singles at several localities in Rogaland from 20th March to 14th April 1993 and in Nordland on 23rd May 1993 (total of 16 individuals now recorded).

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*
FRANCE Third record: male at Bourgneuf-en-Retz, Vendée, on 2nd-4th January 1996*.
SPAIN First record for Iberia: male at Villaviciosa, Asturias, from at least January 1993 to February 1994*.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*
FRANCE Vagrant: 28th March 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 148).

ITALY Fourth record: juvenile female at Arenzano Marsh, Toscana, on 25th October 1960 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 65).
NORWAY Second record: male at Holandsosen, Vega, Nordland, on 16th May 1994.
SWEDEN Vagrants: males on 24th April 1994, 26th April to 2nd May 1994 and 18th May 1994 (nine previous records involving ten individuals; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 129).

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*
FRANCE Vagrants: five records of three individuals in 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 148) and four to five wintering in 1995/96*.
ICELAND Vagrants: three records in 1994 (26 previous records; *Bliki* 16: 20).
MOROCCO Vagrant: male at Sidi-Bou-Rhaba from at least 12th February to 13th March 1995*.
SPAIN Vagrants: two first-winter males and three females at Avilés, Asturias, from 31st October 1994 to April 1995*.
SWEDEN Vagrants: males on 26th March to 19th April 1993 and 2nd & 21st May 1994 (28 previous records involving 15 individuals; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 129).

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*
CROATIA First breeding record: Crna Mlaka fish-pond in 1986 (*Larus* 44/45: 33-39).

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*
CANARY ISLANDS Second record: pair on Tenerife in winter 1995/96 (adult female, perhaps same as in winter 1994/95, *Brit. Birds* 88: 267, from November 1995* and adult male from December 1995*).
FRANCE First records: male in Camargue on 9th February 1992 and 20th-24th November 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 148; 3: 43-45), presumably same individual recurring up to winter 1995/96 (plate 110).
NETHERLANDS Second record: male at Lelystadhaven, Flevoland, on 13th January 1996*.
SWEDEN First record: male on 17th May 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 129).
SWITZERLAND Escape/vagrant: adult male from 30th January to 19th March 1994 (*Orn. Beob.* 92: 474; other records in 1993 and 1995, *Brit. Birds* 88: 267; 89: 29).

Spectacled Eider *Somateria fischeri*
NORWAY Third record: two males and a female at Vardo Harbour, Finnmark, on 23rd-24th February 1988 (only accepted record since 1970).

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*
NORWAY First record since 1986: male at Hoylandet, Nord-Trondelag, on 12th May 1994 (six previous records).

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*
FRANCE Vagrants: migrating male in Common Scoter *M. nigra* flock at Cap Gris-Nez, Pas-de-Calais, on 1st October 1995*, and female at La Turballe, Loire-Atlantique, on 14th November 1995*.
ICELAND Vagrants: two adult males on 22nd-31st July 1994, probably the same as in 1993 (24 previous records; *Brit. Birds* 89: 29; *Bliki* 16: 21).
NORWAY Status summary: up to October 1994, 35 records involving 36 individuals, not including known returning individuals.

Hooded Merganser *Mergus cucullatus*
ICELAND First record: immature male from 21st May to 30th September 1994 (only previous record, in 1988, was of individual of certain captive origin; *Bliki* 16: 22).
NORWAY Deletion: record in June 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 15-16) now rejected (records in 1989 and 1991, *Brit. Birds* 86: 38-39, now become second and third).

Smew *Mergus albellus*
UKRAINE Census: 4,947 wintering on north-western coast of Black Sea during December 1995 to February 1996.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*
FRANCE Increasing: 41 during October 1995 to January 1996.
ICELAND Third confirmed (and first successful) breeding record: pair bred and raised at least two young at lake Vikingavatn in 1994; altogether, eight adults recorded in 1994 (*Bliki* 16: 22-23).
ITALY Fourth to seventh records: singles at Setti Sehidonias, Sardegna, on 15th January 1993, at Lake Santu Miali, Sardegna, on 19th January 1993 and at Molentargius wetland, Sardegna, on 26th February 1994 and 4th February 1995 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 66-67).

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*
HUNGARY Vagrants: adult female at Csaj-tó on 25th-26th February 1995* and adult male at Szeged, Fehértó, on 8th November 1995*.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*
MONTENEGRO Census: 15-25 pairs in 1993-95, no signs of change.
SERBIA Census: 150-175 pairs in 1993-95, almost uniformly distributed, most in central Serbia (110-125 pairs); rare until 1970, slight increase 1970-80, marked increase 1985-95.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*
MONTENEGRO Status: apparently became extinct as breeding species during second half of this century.
SERBIA Census: 65-80 pairs in 1993-95, almost exclusively along large rivers in north, most in

Vojvodina (60-70 pairs); after marked decrease several decades ago, recent stabilisation or slight decrease in last ten years.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*
DENMARK Highest-ever count: 204 at Stevns Klint, Zealand, on 1st October 1995, arriving from Falsterbo, Sweden.
MONTENEGRO Status: none.
SERBIA Census: extinct except perhaps for pairs attempting to breed at three different sites in Vojvodina in recent years (no regular breeding stock any more).

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*
DENMARK Passage and winter: in 1993, 38 migrants in spring and 38 in autumn; 16-17 winter 'residents' in January-May, 14 in September-December (*DOFT* 89: 155).
EGYPT First record since 1954: juvenile at Sharm Farm, South Sinai, on 23rd-24th August 1995 and 19th-21st October 1995 (probably same individual).
MONTENEGRO Census: one to three pairs in south in 1993-95, almost extinct elsewhere since 1975.
SERBIA Census: 26-29 pairs in 1993-95, exclusively in Vojvodina, where populations apparently stable in last 100 years, but extinct elsewhere.

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*
MONTENEGRO Status: extinct by beginning of this century, but recent observations suggest a possible recovery.
SERBIA Status: extinct by beginning of this century.
SLOVENIA First record: juvenile at Triglav national park on 20th November 1994 (*Acrocephalus* 73: 171-173).

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*
AUSTRIA Vagrant: adult at Seewinkel, Burgenland, on 11th July 1995.
CZECH REPUBLIC Third record: adult near Přerov, central Moravia, on 26th May 1994.
MONTENEGRO Census: one to three pairs in 1993-95, almost extinct since 1975.
SERBIA Census: two or three pairs in two areas in central Serbia in 1993-95, the first signs of a slow recovery after a long period of decline.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*
BULGARIA Census: 12 fledglings in 1995 (14 in 1994; decrease due to late cold weather with snow in April, when 12 of the 16 pairs lost their eggs; eight pairs had second clutches).
MONTENEGRO Status: regularly present during summer in 1993-95, but no proved breeding colony.
SERBIA Census: ten to 15 pairs in two colonies.
SPAIN Record number for single area: 552 in Riaza gorges, Segovia, on 13th November 1994.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*
MONTENEGRO Census: 30-50 pairs in 1993-95, no signs of recent change.
SERBIA Census: 60-75 breeding pairs in 1993-95, mostly in south; population stable for several decades, perhaps even slightly increasing in last ten years.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
ICELAND Fifth record: 2nd May 1994 (*Bliki* 16: 23).
MONTENEGRO Census: 15-20 pairs in south in 1993-95, no signs of recent change.
SERBIA Census: 80-110 pairs in 1993-95, almost exclusively along large rivers in north, especially in Vojvodina, where slight decline continues, but almost extinct south of Sava and Danube rivers.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*
FRANCE Vagrant: male at Sebourg, Nord, on 19th September 1995* (also seen in Belgium).
SPAIN Second recent record for Balearics: male at Formentor peninsula, Mallorca, on 27th March 1994*.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*
DENMARK Record spring passage: 135 in April-May 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 155-156).
MONTENEGRO Status: none.
SERBIA Census: two or three pairs breed irregularly and sporadically in Banat, Vojvodina, and perhaps also a pair in Kosovo; trends unclear, fluctuating near extinction, perhaps slightly recovering.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*
MONTENEGRO Census: 150-200 pairs in 1993-95, mainly in north and central parts, population stable.
SERBIA Census: 1,400-1,750 pairs in 1993-95, uniformly distributed all over woodland areas, with marked increase during last ten years since implementation of protective measures and decrease in persecution.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*
MONTENEGRO Census: 175-200 pairs in 1993-95, mainly in north, no signs of change.
SERBIA Census: 700-900 pairs in 1993-95, with perhaps a slight increase in last two decades.

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*
ITALY Second record: 12th April 1989 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 67).

MONTENEGRO Census: five to 15 pairs in 1993-95 in south, no signs of recent changes after dramatic decrease in first half of this century.
SERBIA Census: 30-40 pairs in 1993-95, restricted to east, numbers stable or even slightly increasing during last ten years.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*
MONTENEGRO Census: 275-350 pairs in 1993-95, apparently at least slight increase recently.
SERBIA Census: 2,000-2,500 pairs in 1993-95, almost uniformly distributed, with marked increase, especially in last ten years in north.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*
FRANCE Fifth record: 4th October 1994 (previous records were in 1878, 1902, 1972 and 1979; *Ornithos* 2: 151).
MONTENEGRO Census: occasional observations only during summer in south.
SERBIA First breeding record: Jerma Gorge in 1990; further breeding-range expansion northwards and westwards in 1991-95 (*Protection of Nature* 46-47: 157-161). Census: 12-15 pairs in 1993-95, most in eastern parts of central Serbia; strong expansion northwestwards during last ten years.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Fourth record for Alderney: flying over Fort Albert and Whitegates on 17th January 1996 (previous records were in 1877, 1960 and 1988).
FRANCE Influx: 11 in September-November 1994 (also four in January-March 1994; *Ornithos* 2: 151).

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*
MONTENEGRO Census: perhaps one to three pairs.
SERBIA Census: 25-35 pairs in 1993-95, uniformly distributed in lowland and montane woodlands, most in Vojvodina (15-19 pairs), no obvious recent changes.

Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*
ESTONIA First four breeding records: two pairs (one probably mixed pair with Lesser Spotted Eagle *A. pomarina*) in 1988, and single pairs in 1994 and 1995, all in Tartu District.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*
POLAND Vagrants: subadult and immature at Biebrza Marshes on 19th July 1993 (eighth record; seventh was of two individuals at same location in 1992).

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*
MONTENEGRO Census: only occasional recent summer observations in south.
SERBIA Census: ten to 15 pairs in 1993-95, slow but steady decline.
SLOVAKIA Increasing: nine successful pairs reared 21 young in 1995; breeding range expanding into arable land, where species nests in windbreaks.
SLOVENIA Second record: juvenile at Maribor on 28th August and at Bled on 1st September 1992 (*Vogelwelt* 116: 153-157).

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*
MONTENEGRO Census: 18-25 pairs in 1993-95, stable.
SERBIA Census: 53-57 breeding pairs in 1993-95, most in central Serbia; stable in last ten years, after slight increase in 1970s.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*
MONTENEGRO Census: three to five pairs in 1993-95, no sign of recent change.
SERBIA Census: nine to 14 pairs in 1993-95, apparently uniformly distributed in woodland areas.

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*
DENMARK First record: juvenile shot at Sindal, N-Jutland, in September 1957* (there have been two subsequent records).
FRANCE Vagrant (outside breeding range): first-year at Marquenterre, Somme, from 3rd November 1995 to at least end of January 1996 (perhaps same individual as that in The Netherlands, see below).
NETHERLANDS Second record: juvenile at Vlieland, Friesland, on 17th-20th September 1995, flying south over Texel, Noord-Holland, on 20th (first record was juvenile male found dead near Gendringen, Gelderland, on 24th January 1958).
MONTENEGRO Census: three to five pairs in 1993-95, no signs of change.
SERBIA Status: none.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
DENMARK High passage numbers: in 1993, 1,414 in spring and 812 in autumn (*DOFT* 89: 156).

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*
MONTENEGRO Status: 0-15 pairs in south, breeding irregularly, perhaps even extinct.
SERBIA Status: two to ten pairs (fluctuating), nearly extinct, breeding sporadically (formerly common in south and regular in north).

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
MONTENEGRO Census: 350-400 pairs in 1993-95, no recent change.
SERBIA Census: 3,500-4,000 pairs in 1993-95, recent marked increase, especially in vast open habitats, where species nests on electric pylons.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*
LATVIA Irruption: up to 35 daily at Pape, Liepaja, from 28th August to 25th September 1995 (last significant irruption was in 1979).
MONTENEGRO Status: 'some late-spring records may suggest possible breeding in south'.
SERBIA Census: 120-150 pairs in 1993-95, almost entirely in Vojvodina.
SWEDEN Minor invasion: at least 50 in August-September 1995.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*
DENMARK High passage numbers: in 1993, 424 in spring and 194 in autumn (*DOFT* 89: 157).
MONTENEGRO Census: 20-25 pairs in 1993-95, no recent change.
SERBIA Census: 400-500 pairs in 1993-95, possible slight increase during last ten years.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*
FRANCE Vagrant: Camargue, Bouches-du-Rhône, at end of October 1995*.
MONTENEGRO Census: two to five pairs in 1993-95.
SERBIA Census: three to five pairs in 1993-95, perhaps on way to extinction (formerly distributed more widely, extinct in several areas).

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Escape/vagrant: Jersey from 6th November 1994 (not 7th November as stated previously, *Brit. Birds* 88: 270) into 1995 (*Ann. Bull. Soc. Jersiaise* 26: 322).
FRANCE Vagrant: first-winter in Landes on 19th November 1995*.
MONTENEGRO Status: one pair in 1993-95, occasional winter records.
SERBIA Census: 34-40 pairs in 1993-95, with marked increase and recolonisation during last ten years following adaptation to nesting on electric pylons.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
DENMARK Highest-ever numbers: total of 300-330 (212-213 passage migrants) in 1993, compared with 130 in 1990 (71-72 on passage), 231 (136) in 1991 and 234 (188) in 1992 (*DOFT* 89: 157-158).
MONTENEGRO Census: 15-20 pairs in 1993-95, possibly increasing slightly.
SERBIA Census: 50-55 pairs in 1993-95, now almost stable or even a slight recent increase.

Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*
DENMARK Continuing decline: at the two remaining localities, numbers in 1993 only half those of 1991-92; extinction seems imminent (*DOFT* 89: 158).

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*
GREAT BRITAIN Census data: the BTO Common Birds Census index showed decrease of 73% during the period 1968-91, between the two breeding-bird atlases (*Conserv. Biol.* 9: 1434).

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*
ICELAND Probably extinct as breeder: only five records in 1994, all in October-December (*Bliki* 16: 23).

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*
DENMARK Very low numbers: only 36-38 in 1993, the second-poorest year since the 1970s (*DOFT* 89: 158).

Corn Crake *Crex crex*
SLOVENIA Census: 464 males counted and population estimated to be about 510 males in 1992-93 (*Acrocephalus* 73: 174-180).

Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio*
FRANCE Colonisation: five still present at étang du Canet, Pyrénées-Orientales, to at least 19th August 1995*. Correction: term 'recolonisation' (*Brit. Birds* 89: 31) is not correct, since this species never previously bred in France, current records suggesting possible colonisation.

Common Crane *Grus grus*
DENMARK Record spring passage: 5,173 in April-May 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 159).
ISRAEL Largest-ever wintering numbers: roost with 12,080 individuals in Hula Valley alone in December 1995.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*
SLOVENIA First and second records for 50 years: 6th December 1993 (*Acrocephalus* 16: 194) and male at Loško polje during 17th-24th February 1996.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*
CROATIA First breeding record: pair nesting near Virovitica in 1995, but clutch destroyed, presumably by storm.
NORWAY Fourth record: Finoy, Rogaland, from 8th May to 5th June 1993 (previous three records were of four individuals recorded at six different localities during 1987).

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Second record for Jersey: second-year near La Hougue Bie from 30th September to 17th October 1995 (probably present from 5th September; previous record was on 19th October 1896).

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*
CROATIA First record: Vrana Lake, Dalmatia,

on 31st May 1990 (*Acrocephalus* 55: 180-182).
SLOVAKIA First record: 28th May 1983.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*
CANARY ISLANDS Breeding census: at least 626 individuals and 304 pairs in 1991 (Lanzarote: 227 and 110 pairs; Fuerteventura: 333 and 162 pairs; Gran Canaria: 41 and 20 pairs; Tenerife: 25 and 12 pairs) (*Wader Study Group Bulletin* 76: 43-46).
DENMARK Low passage numbers: only 12-13 recorded away from breeding sites in 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 160).
SWEDEN Declining: five pairs in 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 90-91).

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*
CYPRUS Correction: First records of race *crassirostris* (*Brit. Birds* 89: 32): single in flock of 20 of the race *columbinus* at Potamos Liopetrie in March 1994 and single there in flock of ten of the race *columbinus* in July 1994. Amendment: it is the short-billed race *columbinus* (not *crassirostris*, of which there are only two records of singles as listed above) which is likely to be and has been misidentified as Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus* (Peter Flint & Peter Stewart in *Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957) Newsletter* (May 1995): 2-3).
FRANCE Fourth and fifth records: 17th July 1994 (previous records were in June 1969, May 1970 and May 1980; *Ornithos* 2: 154).

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*
CZECH REPUBLIC Vagrants: one to two in Krkonoše Mountains on 15th-26th May 1993 (where breeding occurred in 1903 and 1946).

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
FRANCE First record: adult killed by hunter in baie de Somme, Somme, on 15th July 1994.
NORWAY Vagrants: adult female at Nælandsstranden, Hå, Rogaland, on 11th-13th June 1993, and adult male with above female there on 13th June 1993 (five previous records).
SWEDEN Vagrants: Ottenby, Öland, and at Rivet, Öland, on 1st August 1995* (19 previous records).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*
CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: juvenile on Tenerife in October-November 1995*.
FRANCE Vagrants: 13th-17th September 1994 and 1st October 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 154); adults at Le Plantay, Ain, on 12th August 1995*, and in baie d'Audierne, Finistère, on 9th-25th September 1995*.
ICELAND Vagrant: 2nd October 1994 (seven previous records; *Bliki* 16: 23).
SWEDEN Vagrant: Hullsjön, Västergötland, on 8th-9th September 1995* (ten previous records; record at Hoburgen, Gotland, on 25th September 1994 was accepted only as *Pluvialis dominica/fulva*).

American Golden Plover/Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica/P. fulva*
NORWAY Vagrant: Lista fyr, Farsund-Agder, on 14th September 1993.

Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria*
BULGARIA First record: 24th May 1985 (*Neophron* 1/96).
FRANCE Vagrants: four in October-December 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 154); Chambéon, Loire, on 3rd November 1995*.
PORTUGAL Vagrant: Lagoa de Santo André, near Sines, on 24th October 1995.
SWEDEN Vagrant: Visby, Gotland, on 1st September 1995* and one, presumed same, at Gislövshammar and Hagestad, Skåne, from 12th September to 9th October 1995*.
SWITZERLAND Fifth and sixth records: 26th March 1994 and 7th October 1994 (*Orn. Beob.* 92: 466).

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*
SPAIN Population estimate: 1,130-1,354 breeding pairs in 1992-95 (*Quercus* 119: 16-19).

Red Knot *Calidris canutus*
UKRAINE Highest-ever winter numbers: 55 with Dunlins *C. alpina* on 11th-16th January 1995.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*
CANARY ISLANDS First record: juvenile on Tenerife in October 1995*.
FRANCE Vagrants: 6th-10th September 1994 (five previous records; *Ornithos* 2: 154, 157); adult in Vendée on 13th August 1995*, juvenile in Loire-Atlantique on 25th-26th August 1995* and adult in Pas-de-Calais on 5th-12th November 1995*.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*
FRANCE First record: adult in breeding plumage in Pas-de-Calais on 15th-21st July 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 154, 183-184).
SWEDEN Vagrant: 18th August 1994 (eight previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 133).

Temminek's Stint *Calidris temminckii*
DENMARK Good passage numbers: 310 in spring and 264 in autumn 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 160-161).
ESTONIA First breeding record: pair with four eggs at Kasari River delta, Matsalu Nature Reserve, Lääne District, on 19th May 1993.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*
FRANCE Vagrant: first-winter in Pas-de-Calais

from 26th October to 11th November 1995* (seven previous records).
ITALY First record: found dead at Novi di Modena, Emilia-Romagna, on 12th February 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 65).

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*
CANARY ISLANDS Vagrants: juvenile and two adults on Tenerife, and juvenile on El Hierro, in October 1995.*
FRANCE Vagrants: Pissevaches, Aude, on 23rd October 1995*, and juvenile at Hoëdic, Morbihan, on 25th October 1995*.
ICELAND Vagrant: 27th July 1994 (45 previous records; *Bliki* 16: 25).
SWEDEN Vagrants: 14th-20th August 1993 and 2nd October 1994 (nine previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 133).

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*
FRANCE Vagrants: 30th August 1993, 9th-11th August 1994 and 2nd October 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 155); Hoëdic, Morbihan, on 11th-12th September 1995*, Ouessant, Finistère, on 13th-14th September 1995* and Ampoigné, Mayenne, on 16th-20th January 1996*.
ICELAND First record: 3rd September 1994 (*Bliki* 15: 52-56; 16: 25).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*
BELGIUM Vagrant: Oudenburg on 29th October 1995 (plate 108).
FRANCE Vagrants: 18 records involving 16 individuals in August-September 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 155); eight during autumn 1995*.
ICELAND Vagrants: three records in 1994 (23 previous records; *Bliki* 16: 25).
IRELAND Summer records: seven, involving eight individuals, in May to early August 1994, plus usual autumn records (*Irish Birds* 5: 339).
NORWAY Vagrants: Makkevika, Giske, More & Romsdal, on 27th August 1991, adult at Ørin, Verdal, Nord-Trondelag, on 25th-28th July 1993, Gaulosen, Helhus, Sor-Trondelag, on 9th August 1994, juvenile at Klåstadkilen, Larvik, Vestfold, on 2nd-3rd October 1994, and Oteren, Storfjord, Troms, on 30th May 1994 (total now 50 records involving 56 individuals).
SWEDEN Vagrants: 29th April to 1st May 1994, 5th June 1994, 17th-18th September 1994 and 17th September 1994 (83 previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 133).
SWITZERLAND Vagrant: Chavornay on 3rd-9th and 12th September 1989; report on 16th September 1989 not accepted.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*
IRELAND First record: 6th-21st August 1994 (*Irish Birds* 5: 337, 339).

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*
DENMARK Very poor passage numbers: only five in spring and 27-28 in autumn 1993 (lowest total since 1977; *DOFT* 89: 161).
SLOVENIA Second record: Sečoveljske soline on 5th September 1993 (*Acrocephalus* 73: 197).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*
CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: juvenile on Tenerife in October 1995*.
DENMARK Vagrant: Ribe, S-Jutland, from 15th August to 8th September 1995* (nine previous records).
FRANCE Vagrants: one on 22nd September 1993 and five records involving six individuals in August-October 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 155); nine, mainly in Brittany, in September 1995*.
ICELAND Vagrants: two on 3rd September 1994 and one from 25th September to 2nd October 1994 (five previous records; *Bliki* 16: 25).
SWEDEN Vagrants: 9th-11th May 1994, 10th-11th September 1994 and 2nd-3rd October 1994 (15 previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 133), and Hagestad, Skåne, 8th-19th



Plate 108. **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos*, Belgium, October 1995 (*Luc Verroken*)

October 1995.
SWITZERLAND Fifth record: 2nd-3rd September 1994 (*Orn. Beob.* 92: 466).

Great Snipe *Gallinago media*
DENMARK Very low numbers: only seven in 1993 (one in April and six in August-September; *DOFT* 89: 161).

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*
FRANCE Vagrant: juvenile at Falguérec, Morbihan, from 2nd to at least 24th October 1995*.
NORWAY Vagrant: juvenile at Revtangen, Klepp, Rogaland, on 24th-25th November 1991 and again at Kolnes, Sola, Rogaland, from 19th January to 1st March 1992 (five previous records).

Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*
FRANCE Deletion: May 1990 report (*Brit. Birds* 84: 6) has been rejected by the French Rarities Committee.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*
SPAIN Range expansion: two half-grown young with several adults at Miguel Esteban Lake, Toledo, on 10th June 1993 (*Ardeola* 42: 222).

Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*
FRANCE Vagrant: single in flight in Camargue on 2nd December 1995*. Deletion: two previous records (Camargue on 7th April 1988 and Ouessant on 29th May 1991, *Brit. Birds* 82: 18; 85: 9; 87: 317) now rejected.
MOROCCO Absence: none reported during winter 1995/96.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*
MOROCCO First record of race *orientalis*: Merja Zerga on 4th January 1996.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*
NETHERLANDS First record: juvenile at Maasvlakte, Zuid-Holland, on 28th October 1995.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*
FRANCE Fifth record: Le Hourdel, Somme, on 2nd January 1996*.
NORWAY First record: 8th-9th May 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 18: 248-249).

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*
FRANCE Vagrant: étang de Poulguidou, Finistère, on 19th September 1995*.
ITALY Fifth record: Caprolace lake, Lazio, from early July to September 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 65).
MOROCCO Fourth record: Oued Sous estuary on 24th January 1995*.
NORWAY Vagrant: juvenile at Lista fyr, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 17th August 1993 (seven previous records).

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*
FRANCE Vagrants: 24th September 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 156); juveniles at étang du Moulin-Neuf, Finistère, on 12th September 1995* and at Belle-Ile, Morbihan, on 12th October 1995*.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*
FRANCE Vagrant: Pas-de-Calais on 5th-19th November 1995*.
NORWAY Fourth record: juvenile at Orrevatn, Klepp, Rogaland, on 20th September 1994. Deletion: record on 26th July 1988, *Brit. Birds* 84: 6, now rejected (record in June 1993, *Brit. Birds* 87: 7, becomes third).

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Third to fifth records for Guernsey: Chouet on 2nd January 1995, 28th-29th August 1995 and 29th September 1995 (previous records were in winter 1879/80 and on 31st August 1982).

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*
FRANCE Influx: 41 during autumn 1995.
GREAT BRITAIN Exceptional passage: over 1,000, mostly adults, off North Sea coasts during August 1995.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*
CANARY ISLANDS First record: adult in full summer plumage on Tenerife in March 1995*.
CZECH REPUBLIC First record: juvenile near Záhlinice, central Moravia, on 27th September 1992 (cf. increasing number of records for inland Europe: Hungary, *Brit. Birds* 87: 7; Austria, *Brit. Birds* 86: 283; Germany, *Brit. Birds* 88: 35).
POLAND Influx: seven records in April-September 1995 (only nine previous records).

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*
FRANCE Vagrant: juvenile on 28th August 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 157).
PORTUGAL Escape/vagrant: Parede, near Lisboa, on 5th-7th January 1996 (regarded as probable escape).
SWEDEN Fifth record: Hulterstad, Öland, on 18th October 1995*.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*
FRANCE First possible breeding record: pair possibly reared two young at lac de Grand-Lieu, Loire-Atlantique, in 1994, and at least five pairs there in 1995, but no definite proof of breeding success (*Ornithos* 3: 41-43).

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Second record for Jersey: adult and first-winter on 8th September 1995 (previous record was on 29th September 1988).
EGYPT Third record: on Mediterranean coast 77 km west of Alexandria on 2nd March 1995.
FRANCE Influx: at least 850 in Les Sables-d'Olonne harbour, Vendée, on 7th September 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 11-13).

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*
DENMARK Second record: second-winter at Hirtshals Harbour, N-Jutland, from 6th November to 4th December 1995*.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*
SWEDEN Second and third records: 29th April (not 30th April as noted previously, *Brit. Birds* 88: 36) to 1st May 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 135) and Ekesåkra, Skåne, on 8th-9th October 1995*.

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*
MALTA Vagrant: ringed in January 1996 (13 previous records).

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*
FRANCE Vagrants: nine records involving two individuals in 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 157-158).
ICELAND Vagrants: two records in 1994 (41 previous records; *Bliki* 16: 28).
NORWAY Vagrants: second-winter at Bergen, Hordaland, on 29th-30th March 1992, first-winter there from 10th January to 17th March 1993, adult there on 26th January 1994, and first-winter there on 16th-19th November 1994 (17 records in total; thirteenth record, in May and July 1992, *Brit. Birds* 87: 318, now becomes fourteenth).
PORTUGAL Vagrant: first-winter at Caxias and Oeiras, near Lisboa, on 24th-29th December 1995.

Common Gull *Larus canus*
MALTA Fourth record: January-February 1996.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Second record for Guernsey: adult at St Peter Port Harbour on 27th October 1995 (previous record was in November 1982).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*
DENMARK High numbers: 24 in 1993 (19 in January-June and five in September-December) compared with average of eight per year in 1977-92 (*DOFT* 89: 164).

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*
SLOVENIA Second record: Ptujsko jczero from 26th November to 4th December 1994 (*Acrocephalus* 68-69-70: 82-83).

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*
DENMARK Vagrant: Skagen, N-Jutland, from 17th May to 21st June 1995* (found dead on 11th July 1995*; six previous records; records during winter 1994, *Brit. Birds* 88: 36, will probably be regarded as referring to two different individuals).
NETHERLANDS Vagrant: second-winter at IJmuiden, Noord-Holland, on 7th-11th November 1995 (seven previous records).

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*
NORWAY Fifth record and first since 1971: Molen, Vestfold, on 15th May 1994 (total of eight individuals).
SWITZERLAND Vagrants: Fanel on 1st-2nd July 1995 and two at Thun on 28th August 1995.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*
SWEDEN Declining: about 480 pairs in 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 95-96).

Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*
MOROCCO Unusually large numbers in late summer 1995: flocks of about 200 at Skhirat plage, south of Rabat, on 13th August 1995, 17 at Oued Chebeika estuary on 28th August 1995, 80 off Khnifiss Lagoon on 29th August 1995, 25 off Sidi Akhfennir and 120 at estuary of Oued Laouar on 30th August 1995.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*
SLOVENIA First record: 5th June 1993 (*Acrocephalus* 16: 170-171, 195).

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*
HUNGARY Fourth record: two adults at Fertöújlak, Mekszikópuszta, on 16th-17th May 1995.
MACEDONIA First and second records: four at Carina, Prespa Lake, on 18th September 1989 and six near Nikolić, Dojran Lake, on 14th April 1994.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*
SPAIN First inland breeding records: nest with eggs at Cuerda del Pozo reservoir, Soria, and two young raised at gravel-pits in Velilla de San Antonio, Madrid, in 1995 (*Ardeola* 42: 224).

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*
HUNGARY Fourth record: Naszály-Ferencmajor-fishponds on 16th September 1995.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*
FRANCE Vagrants: 7th July 1992 and 20th August 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 158; not 29th

August 1994 as noted previously, *Brit. Birds* 88: 273).

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*
CZECH REPUBLIC First breeding record: one unfledged and, later, two fledged young in colony of Common Terns *S. hirundo* near Karvina town, northern Moravia, in July 1995.

Inca Tern *Larosterna inca*
FRANCE Presumed escapes: at least a dozen records between Dunkerque and Saint-Nazaire from July 1994 to January 1995 (*Ornithos* 2: 167, 184-185).

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*
BELARUS Third breeding record: 10-15 pairs in tern colony at Lakhva fish-breeding farm, Luninets district, Brest region, in June 1995.
NORWAY Fifth record: Havsteinen, Giske, More & Romsdal, on 6th July 1985.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*
ICELAND Vagrants of Nearctic race *surinamensis*: adult male on 10th June 1956, adult female on 6th June 1957 and adult male on 21st-22nd June 1970 (*Bliki* 2: 44-55).

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*
CHANNEL ISLANDS First record for Guernsey: first-winter at the Vale Pond on 4th-5th October 1995 and at Rue des Houges on 18th October 1995.

Little Auk *Alle alle*
AUSTRIA First record: Vienna on 4th November 1995.
DENMARK Highest-ever numbers: 2,300 passing Hanstholm, N-Jutland, 1,978 passing Vejlby Klit, W-Jutland, and 1,628 passing Blåvands Huk, W-Jutland, all on 28th October 1995.
FRANCE High numbers: at least 370, mainly off Nord and Pas-de-Calais, from 30th October to 19th November 1995.
GREAT BRITAIN Major influx: huge numbers appeared inshore off eastern England from late October and into November 1995, with 40,000 at Flamborough Head, Humberside, alone during first half of November.

Tufted Puffin *Lunda cirrhata*
SWEDEN First record: 1st and 8th June 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 136).

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*
GREAT BRITAIN Census data: the BTO Common Birds Census index showed a decrease of 72% during the period 1968-91, between the two breeding-bird atlases (*Conserv. Biol.* 9: 1434).

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
NORWAY Fourth-record date extension: juvenile showing characters of the race *orientalis* at Borhaug, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 16th-17th February 1992 (same individual as that in More & Romsdal from 25th January to 12th February 1992, *Brit. Birds* 88: 273).
SWEDEN Vagrant: 3rd January to 18th March 1994 (17 previous records involving nine individuals; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 137).

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*
ITALY Fourth and fifth records: two at Pantelleria, Sicilia, on 29th March 1994 and one at Cagliari, Sardegna, on 1st September 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 67).

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*
ICELAND First record and second for the Western Palearctic: Heimaey on 19th October 1995*.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*
MOROCCO Introduced population: up to three sighted regularly at Casablanca, Anfa district, during 1990-95, and single at Asilah on 3rd January 1996.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*
CROATIA First breeding record: egg in nest of Carrion Crow *Corvus corone cornix* in Trogir, near Split, on 7th May 1988 (*Larus* 41/42: 151-164).
NORWAY Deletion: record on 9th May 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 20) now rejected, so record on 25th April 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 9; 88: 37) again becomes fourth.
POLAND Second record: adult at Brzeszcze, Upper Silesia, on 13th August 1995 (first was in August 1986).

Didric Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius*
ISRAEL First record and second West Palearctic record: already noted (*Brit. Birds* 87: 319; 88: 37), see plates 111 & 112.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*
MALTA First breeding record: recently fledged juvenile, probably fostered by Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti*, on 17th July 1993 (*Il-Merill* 28: 22).

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*
FAROE ISLANDS Second record: Húsavik on 11th August 1995 (first record was in May 1954).

Little Owl *Athene noctua*
DENMARK Highest-ever breeding numbers: 45 confirmed pairs (plus six 'probable' and eight 'possible') in 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 169).

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*
SPAIN Breeding population established: following population explosion of Common

Voles *Microtus arvalis*, 360 ± 166 pairs estimated in the Northern Meseta in 1994 (*Quercus* 119: 19-22); species previously just wintering, with only sporadic breeding.

Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*
DENMARK First record: male killed by car at Skagen, N-Jutland, on 4th October 1991*.

White-throated Needletail Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus*
SWEDEN First record: 22nd-27th May 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 137).

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*
NORWAY Fourth record: Utsira, Rogaland, on 3rd June 1995.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Second record for Alderney: 13th and 15th September 1995 (first was on 29th March 1988).

Little Swift *Apus affinis*
CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: Gran Canaria in July 1994*.
CYPRUS Third to fifth records: Asprokremmos Dam Pool on 9th April 1995, Phassouri Reed-beds on 14th April 1995, and Paphos Lighthouse area on 22nd April 1995.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*
MONTENEGRO First record: male and female on 26th July 1993 and male and two females on 27th July 1993 (*Acrocephalus* 65-66: 136).

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*
FRANCE Fifth record: 15th October 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 158).

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*
AUSTRIA High breeding numbers: at least 250 pairs in eastern Austria in 1995.

Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus*
EGYPT Fourth record and fifth for Western Palearctic: Abu Simbel on 29th September 1995.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
DENMARK First breeding record since 1977: pair bred in 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 171).

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*
DENMARK Poor numbers: 155-200 in 1993, with only one confirmed breeding pair (plus two 'probables' and three 'possibles), one of lowest totals in the last ten years (*DOFT* 89: 172).

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*
SWEDEN Declining: eight confirmed and five probable breeding records and about 32 individuals in 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 101-102).

Thick-billed Lark *Ramphocoris clotbey*
EGYPT First breeding record: two adults south of Marsa Matruh, Western Desert, on 12th June 1995, and two recently fledged young with one adult there on 14th June 1995.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*
DENMARK Continued decline: probably 50-75 pairs in 1993, compared with an estimated 300-500 pairs in late 1980s; current trend would lead to extinction within 20-30 years (as has already occurred in Sweden and Switzerland, *Brit. Birds* 85: 10; 88: 274; *DOFT* 89: 173).

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*
CHANNEL ISLANDS Second record for Herm: six on 14th October 1995 (previous record was of 30 on 25th March 1958).

Oriental Lark *Alauda gulgula*
EGYPT Third record: Sharm Farm, South Sinai, on 13th-14th October 1995, and two there on 20th-21st October 1995.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*
DENMARK Continued increase: total of 5,563 in 1993 (1,213 in January-May and 4,350 in September-December) (*DOFT* 89: 173-174).

Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola*
ISRAEL Third record: Beit Shean Valley on 20th December 1995.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*
EGYPT First record for Egypt and Western Palearctic: Wadi Hagul on 30th March 1995*.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*
DENMARK Vagrants: 48 in 1993 (including third-ever spring record), the second-best year after peak of 50 in 1988 (*DOFT* 89: 174); 29 in September-November 1995.
EGYPT Largest-ever number: ten at Sharm Farm, South Sinai, on 13th-14th October 1995, and at least 11 there on 20th October 1995.
FRANCE Vagrants: 25 records involving 38 individuals in September-November 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 159); 25 in autumn 1995, and two wintering at Agen, Lot-et-Garonne, and two other individuals in Crau, Bouches-du-Rhône, from end of December 1995 to at least 17th January 1996*.
GIBRALTAR First record: ringed on 30th April 1995.
MOROCCO Wintering records: singles at Massa on 27th December 1995* and at Merja Zerga in December 1995*.
SWEDEN Vagrants: 50 in 1994 (about 255 previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 102-103).

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*
MALTA First and second breeding records: single pairs each seen feeding single newly fledged young in early July 1993 (*Il-Merill* 28: 22).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*
FRANCE Fifth record: 5th November 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 159).
NORWAY Vagrant: Røvær, Haugesund, Rogaland, on 1st November 1994.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*
FRANCE Deletion: record in 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 14) now rejected (record in September 1990, *Brit. Birds* 84: 233, now stands as the only one; *Ornithos* 2: 159).
NORWAY Third and fourth records: Harestadmyra, Randaberg, Rogaland, on 1st October 1992 and Fedje, Hordaland, on 10th October 1994.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*
DENMARK Low passage numbers: fewer than usual in 1993, with 141 (29 in spring and 112 in autumn), compared with 335 in 1991 and 307 in 1992 (*DOFT* 89: 174).

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*
DENMARK Invasion: about 100 during winter 1995/96*.
SWEDEN First and second records: 22nd-23rd October 1993 and 19 individuals from 22nd December 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 138).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
FRANCE Fifth record: juvenile at La Belle-Henriette, Vendée, on 9th September 1995*.
ICELAND Fourth record: 11th September 1994 (*Bliki* 16: 31).
ITALY Vagrant: male at Bilancino dam, Barbarino del Mugello, Toscana, on 10th May 1994 (five previous records; *Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 67).
NETHERLANDS Fifth record: first-winter at Petten, Noord-Holland, on 25th-29th September 1995.
SWEDEN Influx: at least 12 during autumn 1995*.
SWITZERLAND Second and third records: males on 21st April 1994 and 1st-2nd May 1994 (*Orn. Beob.* 92: 471, 473).
UKRAINE Colonisation: in Volyn' region, first record on 13th April 1989, pair and male on 1st May 1992, bred for first time in 1993; also observed in Ternopil region from 1985, in Lviv region from 1986 and in Rivne region from 1988 (*Troglodytes* 3: 61).

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*
DENMARK First breeding record of pair of race *yarrellii* for 20 years: one pair bred in 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 174).

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant/escape: Nottingham from 20th February 1996 into at least March* (first, in June 1985, is included in Category D, so this winter record is a potential first for Category A).
ICELAND First record: from mid April to late July 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 38; *Bliki* 16: 7-11, 31).

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*
FRANCE Small influx: from 22nd January 1996 onwards, mainly in Northern France (maximum of 15 together).
GREAT BRITAIN Major irruption: around 6,000 arrived during January 1996.
NORWAY Largest irruption for many years: many thousands in southern Norway during autumn and winter 1995; exact number not yet available, but three flocks, totalling 10,000 individuals, at Elverum, Hedmark, on 15th December 1995 are noteworthy.
SWEDEN Influx: occurs every winter in southern Sweden, but exceptional numbers during winter 1995/96.

Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*
EGYPT Second record: male at Abu Simbel on 16th November 1995; male, perhaps same individual, and female/juvenile there on 8th December 1995 (previous record was in 1938).

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*
ICELAND Highest total in one year: 170 in spring 1994, most in early April (*Bliki* 16: 32-34).

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*
DENMARK Second record: juvenile male at Christianso, Bornholm, from 30th October to 2nd November 1995*.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*
LATVIA Correction: breeding records of race *svecica* in 1992 and 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 275) related to Slovakia, not Latvia.
SLOVAKIA See Latvia, above.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*
ISRAEL First record: overwintering near Zefat, northern Israel, from 1st January 1996.
NORWAY Vagrant: Eigersund, Rogaland, on 8th October 1995*.
POLAND First record: immature male at Darłówo, Baltic coast, on 30th October 1995.
SWEDEN Vagrant: female at Västergarn, Gotland, on 1st September 1995* (ten previous records; record from Kvikkjokk on 14th August 1994, *Brit. Birds* 88: 275, not accepted).

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*
SWEDEN Fifth record: Hoburgen, Gotland, on 9th August 1995*.

Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri*
ITALY Third record: male at Zannone isle, Lazio, on 10th-15th November 1993 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 65).

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*
DENMARK Continued increase: 52 in 1993, mostly passage migrants, the largest number recorded in the period since 1977 (*DOFT* 89: 175). Vagrants of eastern race *maura/stejnegeri*: 9th October 1993 (*DOFT* 89: 106), 22nd September 1994, 26th September 1994 and 15th October 1995* (21 previous records).
NORWAY Vagrants of eastern race *maura/stejnegeri*: 7th-8th October 1989, 28th September 1991, 12th October 1991, 5th May 1992, 27th September 1992 and 15th October 1994 (11 previous records, all in 1977-88; *Vår Fuglefauna* 17: 259-278).
PORTUGAL First record of eastern race *maura/stejnegeri*: 13th November 1993 (*Pardela* 1(2): 8).

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*
SWEDEN Second record: 6th April 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 139).

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*
POLAND First record: female/immature at Jastarnia, Hel Peninsula, on 14th October 1995.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*
DENMARK Third record: Fano, S-Jutland, on 23rd-26th November 1995*.

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha*
CYPRUS Amendment: records on 21st and 23rd April 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 39) considered to refer to the same individual.

Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura*
FRANCE Vagrant (outside breeding range): Hautes-Pyrénées on 10th August 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 159).

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*
FRANCE Second record: Ouessant on 16th-19th October 1995*. Deletion: report of 22nd October 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 321) was rejected.
SWEDEN First record: Solleron, Dalarna, on 22nd-23rd October 1995*.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni*
FRANCE Vagrant: 21st January 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 160).

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*
FRANCE Vagrant: male with characteristics of race *atrogularis* on 22nd October 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 160).
NETHERLANDS Third record of race *atrogularis*: first-winter female in Den Helder, Noord-Holland, from 5th January to at least 17th February 1996 (plates 113 & 114).
SWEDEN Vagrant: 27th February to 26th March 1994 (13 previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 139).

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*
SWEDEN Second record: 10th April 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 140).

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*
FRANCE Increase: some singing males north to baie de Seine, Seine-Maritime, Normandy, during summer 1995*.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*
NORWAY Fifth record: Molen, Vestfold, on 11th June 1989 (record of 28th May to 7th June 1992, *Brit. Birds* 89: 40, becomes sixth; total of eight records).
SWITZERLAND Breeding census: 260-300 pairs in 1992, 90% at Lake Neuchâtel (first colonised in 1956; *Orn. Beob.* 92: 435-453).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*
FRANCE Fifth to seventh records: two in August and one in October 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 160).
HUNGARY Third record: trapped in Hanság on 21st July 1995*.
NORWAY Second record: adult ringed at Gunnarsmyr, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 26th September 1992.
POLAND First record: adult trapped near Nowakowo, Vistula Lagoon, on 9th July 1995.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
FRANCE Second record: 23rd October 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 160).

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*
NETHERLANDS Fifth and sixth records: De Cocksdorp, Texel, on 19th September 1995* and Maasvlakte, Zuid-Holland, on 6th October 1995.
SWEDEN Fourth record and first of race *rama*: 26th August 1993 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 140).

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*
NETHERLANDS Second record: male at Westkapelle, Zeeland, from 26th November to 3rd December 1995.
SWEDEN Third record: 8th October to 2nd November 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 140).

Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola*
CANARY ISLANDS First record: adult male on Fuerteventura in October 1995*.

Ménétries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*
ISRAEL Second or third record: male at Yotvata, southern Israel, on 29th March 1984.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*
SWEDEN Vagrant: 22nd October to 1st November 1994 (ten previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 140-141).

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*
GIBRALTAR First record: 24th October 1995.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
DENMARK Third-best year ever: at least 38 (excluding breeders) in 1993, the majority in May-June; one pair bred (previous breeding in 1990 and 1992)(*DOFT* 89: 176-177).
UKRAINE Second record of race *nitidus*: near Odessa on 5th-7th August 1994.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*
DENMARK Vagrants: three or four in October 1993 (four or five annually since 1989) (*DOFT* 89: 177); six in October-November 1995.
FRANCE Vagrants: four records involving six individuals in October-November 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 161); singles at Cap Gris-Nez, Pas-de-Calais, on 28th October 1995*, on Ouessant on 31st October 1995* and at Marquenterre, Somme, on 15th November 1995*.
ITALY First record: ringed at Staranzano, Friuli Venezia Giulia, on 31st October 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 66).
NORWAY Vagrants: More & Romsdal on 23rd October 1982, Vest-Agder on 10th October 1989, Vest-Agder on 12th October 1989, Rogaland on 15th October 1989, Vest-Agder on 22nd October 1989, and Rogaland on 14th-15th October 1994 (total of 48 records involving 56 individuals).
UKRAINE Vagrant: 8th November 1986 (*Troglodytes* 3: 12).

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*
DENMARK Vagrants: eight in September-November 1995.
FRANCE Vagrants: 60 records involving 65 individuals in September-November 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 161). Third and fourth records of race *humei*: singles on Hoedic, Morbihan, on 24th-28th October 1995* and in Crau, Bouches-du-Rhône, from 17th January 1996* onwards.
SWEDEN Vagrants: 50 in 1994 (not 48 as stated in *Brit. Birds* 89: 41; total of 545 previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 111). Vagrants of race *humei* (treated as separate species in Sweden's totals): five during 24th October to 21st November 1994 (six previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 141).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*
FRANCE Fourth and fifth records: 9th November 1994 (not 8th November as stated previously, *Brit. Birds* 88: 278; *Ornithos* 2: 160, 161), and on Ouessant on 28th October 1995*.
SWEDEN Vagrants: five during 25th September to 23rd October 1994 (26 previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 141).

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*
FRANCE Vagrants: 13th November 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 162), on Sein, Finistère, on 21st October 1995* and on Ouessant on 16th November 1995*.
ITALY First record: ringed at Giannutri isle, Toscana, on 8th May 1993 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 66).
LATVIA First record: trapped at Pape, Liepaja, on 17th October 1995*.
NORWAY Second and sixth records: ringed at Utsira, Rogaland, on 20th October 1984 and juvenile ringed at Sele, Klepp, Rogaland, on 31st October 1993 (earlier third and fourth records, *Brit. Birds* 86: 291, become fourth and fifth).

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*
FAROE ISLANDS Fifth record: female ringed on Nólsoy on 28th June 1995 (previous records all in autumn).
FRANCE High autumn numbers: 20-25 different individuals on Ouessant in October/early November 1995*.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*
BELARUS Second breeding locality: pair in reedbeds in area abandoned after Chernobyl accident, south of Khoiniki, Gomel region, in late May 1995.
DENMARK Continued increase and expansion: record numbers at several localities in 1993, including annual total of 4,411 in Vejlerne (*DOFT* 89: 177).

Siberian Tit *Parus cinctus*
SWEDEN Large irruption: usually sedentary, but occurred in large numbers in autumn 1994, with some as far south as Södermanland (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 113-114).

European Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*
FINLAND Largest irruption of race *asiatica* since 1970s: in September-October 1995, already noted (*Brit. Birds* 89: 42).
LATVIA Irruption of race *asiatica*: more than 50 trapped or seen at Pape, Liepaja, during 3rd-31st October 1995.
SWEDEN Irruption of race *asiatica*: probably at least a few thousand in northernmost provinces of Norrbotten, Västerbotten and Lappland, first seen in early September 1995, with numbers peaking before Christmas.



Plate 109. House Crows *Corvus splendens*, **Netherlands, August 1995** (*Arnoud B. van den Berg*)

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*
DENMARK Expansion: continued spread northwards in Jutland in 1993, probably a result of recent mild winters (*DOFT* 89: 178).

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*
DENMARK Status: total of about 330 in 1993, including 50-57 pairs breeding (*DOFT* 89: 178).

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*
AUSTRIA First record: Rheindelta, Vorarlberg, from 1st May to 6th October 1994.
CYPRUS Third record: female at Paphos Lighthouse area on 6th May 1995.
GREECE First record: adult male at Evros Delta on 28th September 1995.
SWEDEN Vagrants: 8th-17th October 1994 and 20th October to 3rd November 1994 (six previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 142).

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*
DENMARK First record of race *pallidirostris*: Sydlangeland, Fuen, on 22nd-23rd October 1995*.
GREAT BRITAIN Winter numbers: no more than 75 wintered annually during 1986-92 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 478-484); this figure is less than half that estimated by the BTO's *Winter Atlas* for 1981-84, and adds to the evidence for long-term decline.

Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*
DENMARK Irruption: more than 1,000 during autumn 1995.
FINLAND Irruption: from July 1995 onwards already noted (*Brit. Birds* 89: 42).
LATVIA Irruption: more than 3,000 at Pape, Liepaja, between 19th August and 20th October 1995; of 32 trapped, almost all were of slender-billed eastern race *macrorhynchos*.
NORWAY Largest irruption of race *macrorhynchos* for many years: probably involving many thousands in southern Norway during August 1995, with individuals remaining into December 1995; flocks of up to 400, at Lista, Vest-Agder, noted on direct migration.
SWEDEN Largest irruption in modern times of race *macrorhynchos*: starting in mid August 1995, occurring all over Sweden, with second wave arriving in late October/early November 1995, with a few still present in January 1996. (Ornamental Arolla Pines *Pinus cembra* were especially favoured.)

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*
FRANCE First record: adult at île de Noirmoutier, Vendée, on 22nd June 1995 (perhaps same individual as that in the Netherlands in May, *Brit. Birds* 89: 42).

House Crow *Corvus splendens*
NETHERLANDS First records: two at Hoek van Holland from 10th April 1994 to at least 4th February 1996 (plate 109), a third individual at Renesse, Zeeland, from 21st November 1994 until at least 14th November 1995 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 6-10).

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
MALTA First breeding records: pair reared three young in May-June 1994 (*Il-Merill* 28: 21; also breeding in 1993 and 1994 on Comino after adults released from captivity).

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*
AUSTRIA Vagrants: small influx in spring 1995, with at least five records in eastern part of Austria.
BULGARIA Breeding: over 1,000 pairs bred near Karnobat, Burgas region, in 1995.
ICELAND Vagrant: three records in August 1994 (ten previous records; *Bliki* 16: 41).
ISRAEL First winter record: adult in Beit Shean Valley on 26th December 1991.

Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis*
CROATIA Second record: adult male and immature at Medvednica Mt., near Zagreb, on 7th November 1993 (first record was at Ston, near Dubrovnik, in 1893).

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*
GREAT BRITAIN Highest total in one year: about ten in October 1995*.
ICELAND Highest total in one year: at least four in autumn 1995* (five previous records).

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*
FRANCE First record of North African race *spodiogenys*: Lozère on 27th March 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 163).

European Serin *Serinus serinus*
DENMARK Influx: 53 in 1993, with one pair possibly breeding (*DOFT* 89: 179).

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*
DENMARK Largest invasion since winter 1986/87: tens of thousands during autumn 1995, with highest-ever one-day count when 5,000 passed Nordmandshage, N-Jutland, on 2nd November.
LATVIA Second and third records of race *cabaret*: two trapped at Pape, Liepaja, on 31st October and 9th November 1995 (first record was in October 1990).
NORWAY Large irruption of race *flammea*: many thousands, probably hundreds of thousands, in southern Norway during autumn and winter 1995 (flocks also included a higher number of Arctic Redpolls *C. hornemanni* than usual).

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*
DENMARK Invasion: more than 100 individuals during autumn/winter 1995/96.
FRANCE Vagrant: Quimper, Finistère, from 7th to at least 16th January 1996* and at least one at Hardelot, Pas-de-Calais, from 24th January to 4th February 1996*.
SLOVAKIA Second record: one, together with others exhibiting characters intermediate between Common Redpoll *C. flammea* and Arctic Redpoll, trapped in East Slovakia in winter 1995/96.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*
DENMARK Small influx: 13 in 1993 (five in spring and eight in autumn) (*DOFT* 89: 179).
SWEDEN Irruption: large numbers in Lappland during autumn 1995, but only a few farther south (unusual, since invasions usually spread southwards later in the season).

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*
DENMARK Invasion: 591 in June-December 1993, the largest number since the record 5,600 in 1990 (*DOFT* 89: 179-180).

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*
FRANCE Third record: Territoire de Belfort on 30th June 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 163).

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*
FRANCE Colonisation: nine records involving over 40 individuals in 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 163).
SPAIN Increasing: after first record in Algeciras on 8th November 1986, two in 1988, singles in 1990 and 1993, two in 1994 and four in 1995 (all of individuals ringed in autumn).

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator*
DENMARK Influx: two passing Nordmandshage, N-Jutland, on 2nd November 1995* and 6-13 individuals at Skagen, N-Jutland, 13th-19th November 1995 (highest numbers for several decades).
NORWAY Largest migration count: 640 passed Molen, Vestfold, in four-hour period on 28th October 1995.

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Plate 110. Male Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* **(right) and male Tufted Duck** *A. fuligula*, **France, February 1996** (*Arnoud B. van den Berg*)

Plates 111 & 112. Male Didric Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius*, **Israel, March 1994** (*left, A. Noeske; right, S. Pfützke*)

Plates 113 & 114. First-winter female Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* **of race** *atrogularis*, **Netherlands, January 1996** (*large, Arie Ouwerkerk; small, Anthony McGeehan*)

Plate 115. Magnolia Warbler *Dendroica magnolia*, **Iceland, 8th November 1995** (*Gunnlaugur Pétursson*). The first record for Iceland.













SWEDEN Irruption: first reports in Gotland in late September 1995, later occurring in large numbers in central Sweden, but very few south of Värmland-Södermanland.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*
CROATIA Large influx: both inland and on the coast in winter 1995/96.
ICELAND Influx: 33 in 1994, first in late October and some well into 1995 (37 previous records; *Bliki* 16: 43).

Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina*
GREAT BRITAIN Fourth record: St Kilda, Western Isles, on 20th September 1995.

Northern Parula *Parula americana*
FRANCE Second record: Ouessant on 21st October 1995*.
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: St Agnes, Scilly, on 10th October 1995.

Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica*
GREAT BRITAIN Second record: Prawle Point, Devon, on 18th October 1995.

Magnolia Warbler *Dendroica magnolia*
ICELAND First and second records: Bakki í A-Landeyjum from 29th September to 7th December 1995* (plate 115), and at Seltjörn í Njarðvik on 21st-23rd October 1995*.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 13th October 1995.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*
GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: St Agnes, Scilly, on 27th October to 6th November 1995, and Kenidjack, Cornwall, on 29th October 1995.

Bay-breasted Warbler *Dendroica castanea*
GREAT BRITAIN First record: Land's End, Cornwall, on 1st October 1995*.

Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*
DENMARK High numbers: 1,021 in autumn-winter 1993, with marked peak in September (*DOFT* 89: 180).

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*
SWEDEN Vagrants: Utklippan, Blekinge, on 14th-22nd October 1995*, Karlstad, Värmland, on 28th December 1995* and Jönköping on 25th-26th January 1996* (nine previous records).

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*
ICELAND Fifth record: 18th November 1994 (*Bliki* 16: 43).
MOROCCO Second record: Oued Massa estuary on 4th April 1995* (perhaps same individual as that at Agadir on 21st October 1994, *Brit. Birds* 89: 44).

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*
FRANCE Fourth record: 24th-27th October 1994 (*Ornithos* 2: 164).

Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*
NORWAY Vagrant: adult male at Sandoy, More & Romsdal, on 4th June 1993 (at present, all Norwegian records of this species are admitted to the A list).

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*
GREAT BRITAIN Census data: the BTO Common Birds Census index showed decrease of 76% during the period 1968-91, between the two breeding-bird atlases (*Conserv. Biol.* 9: 1434).
SWEDEN Declining: five singing males, but only one confirmed breeding record in 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 121).

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*
FRANCE Second record: juvenile at Trunvel, Finistère, on 15th-17th August 1995*.

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Response of Booted Eagles to human disturbance

Jacques Carlon

ABSTRACT A long-term study of the Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* in southwest France has revealed a marked change in the general distribution of the 58 breeding pairs in this relatively large population. A variety of forms of human disturbance has caused a marked movement of breeders away from some large previously undisturbed forest areas into other, less-typical habitats, and the species has also begun to hunt in urban areas and in villages. This ability to adapt to change may help to explain why this species seems currently to be increasing in western Europe. The total French breeding population is now estimated at 800-1,200 pairs.

Until quite recently, scant enthusiasm had been shown for the study of Booted Eagles *Hieraaetus pennatus* during the breeding season. Compared with other eagles, this species is rarely seen in the open when nesting, even within its territory, and breeding-season studies require a rigorous method and a considerable investment of time.

During the 13 years 1982-94, a thorough and sustained study of the Booted Eagle population was carried out in the département of Pyrénées-Atlantiques (provinces of Béarn and the French Pays Basque), in southwestern France. During this period, I made a total of 1,400 hours of field observations, these being supplemented by further observations by other workers and colleagues. The fieldwork included, in the first five years (1982-86), an exhaustive census of the breeding population.

In Béarn, where this species reaches its highest density in France, it prefers the sunny southern and southwestern slopes, and its productivity declines noticeably

in years with wet springs and low temperatures, confirming the hypothesis that the Booted Eagle is dependent on favourable climatic and eco-geographic conditions to maintain or even increase its numbers. Within the study area, the three main habitat zones comprise forested areas in:

1. Lowland plains and hills (plate 116).
2. Submontane hills (plate 117).
3. Lower alpine slopes (plate 118).

This paper summarises a particularly interesting finding of the study: namely, the reaction of the eagles to human disturbance and to changes in the general environment of the area. The results were originally published in full, in French, as part of a special issue of the local Groupe d'Etudes Ornithologiques Béarnais publication *La Marie-Blanque* (vol. 4, 1995).

Negative impact of human beings

Booted Eagle pairs are well known for their fidelity to their nest sites over a number of consecutive years, unless they succumb to disturbance, or worse, from human beings.

During the past two decades, and especially since the mid 1980s, regular human invasion of the woods and forest of the Plaine du Gave de Pau and the lower slopes of the Pyrénées has sharply increased. This has led to a substantial proportion (about 30%) of the nest sites being abandoned and, as a secondary effect, to a decline in both the diversity and the total numbers of forest bird species on which the Booted Eagle essentially preys.

The most prejudicial negative factors are all a result of socio-economic development. Principal among these are motorcycle scramblers, who career through the entire area, sometimes in groups of four or five, often for hours on end and in a deafening uproar, causing untold damage to the flora. Scarcely less constricting is the clear-felling or thinning of certain parcels of forest in spring and summer, the traditional and more rational felling in autumn no longer being adhered to by some foresters. It is generally acknowledged that modern methods of silviculture have an adverse influence on this species, so particular in its choice of nest sites (e.g. Génsbol 1986).

Hunters are increasing in inverse proportion to the numbers of their quarry, but they are not generally regarded as prejudicial to raptors, since shooting does not begin until after the breeding season. This, however, overlooks the fact that their permits allow them to roam the forest in spring, as well as in summer, and from time to time they even move up to the ridgetops in powerful four-wheel-drive vehicles, transforming the narrow paths into virtual roadways. As a result, between 1985 and 1990, three pairs of eagles breeding along one 1,200-m ridge all deserted their nest sites.

Furthermore, in recent years a veritable invasion of mountain-bikes has been witnessed. Their riders, not content with using tracks and footpaths, go

FACING PAGE

Plate 116. Typical habitat of lowland plains and hills (zone 1) (*J. Carlon*)

Plate 117. Nest site of Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* in submontane hills (zone 2) (*J. Carlon*)

Plate 118. Typical habitat of lower alpine slopes (zone 3) (*J. Carlon*)



everywhere, even along the beds of streams and rivers in the dry season.

Ramblers, horseriders, and Sunday strollers with their uncontrolled dogs complete this edifying picture of the damaging effects of human activities.

With the modern desire to visit and enjoy the countryside and to explore wilderness areas, it is hardly practical to demand a total ban on the incursion of human beings in such large numbers, even though such a policy may be judged desirable. At the same time, amid evidence of an ever-growing awareness of the importance of wildlife conservation, it would not seem unreasonable to suggest that, for example, mountain-bikers and scramblers be restricted to specified large areas in which they may freely pursue their activities.

Emigration

Between 1986 and 1990, there was a clear drop in the numbers of Booted Eagles breeding in the lower-lying parts of the study area (zones 1 and 2). One factor contributing to this may have been competition for nest sites with the Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, which arrives a month earlier than the Booted Eagle and whose numbers increased greatly in this region up to 1990; this is one typical factor limiting the increase of the eagle, which will readily desert its nest in the face of competition from the kite.

Nevertheless, although most emigrations in the animal kingdom are the result of overpopulation or interspecific competition, it seems clear that the combined effects of all the above-mentioned types of human disturbance are the basic cause of the abandonment of breeding sites.

In Béarn, however, this desertion of traditional habitats, combined with important though temporary changes in climatic conditions, has been counterbalanced by a virtually equivalent movement into the lower alpine zone 3. Two facts enabled this conclusion to be reached. First, the 1982-86 census showed that zone 3 was occupied by only 15% of the area's total number of breeding pairs; subsequently, however, accurate and regular counts of Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* undertaken from 1987 onwards in the principal valleys of this zone led to the discovery of 14 new sites occupied by breeding pairs of Booted Eagles which had not been present in 1986 or before. Secondly, this additional population, estimated at 24% of the total within the study area, corresponds exactly to that which deserted zones 1 and 2 (table 1).

This short-distance emigration covers only 25-50 km, but zone 3 is, to date, clearly less subject to the various forms of disturbance described above. The eagle has apparently opted for the best available strategy in its search for a less disturbed breeding habitat.

This phenomenon has played a major role in the maintenance of, or even increase in, the population, since it expands the species' range and could

Table 1. Comparative distribution of nest sites of Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* in Béarn, Pyrénées-Atlantiques, in 1986 and 1994.

Forested areas	1986 No. pairs (%)	1994 No. pairs (%)
Zone 1. Hills and lowland plain Zone 2. Submontane hills	49 (85%)	35 (60%)
Zone 3. Lower alpine slopes	9 (15%)	23 (40%)

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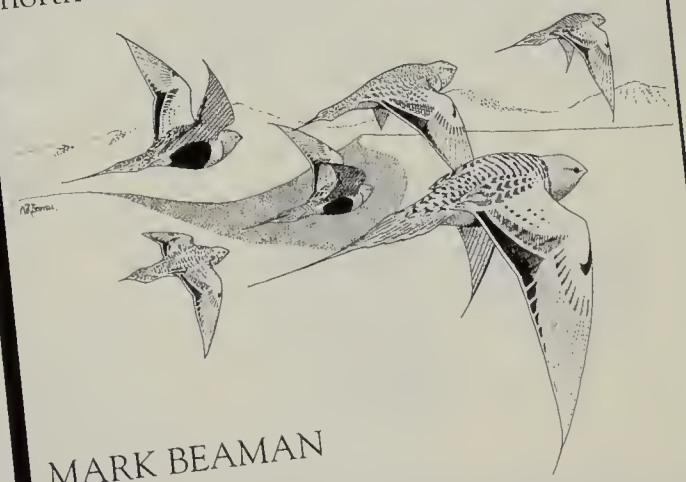
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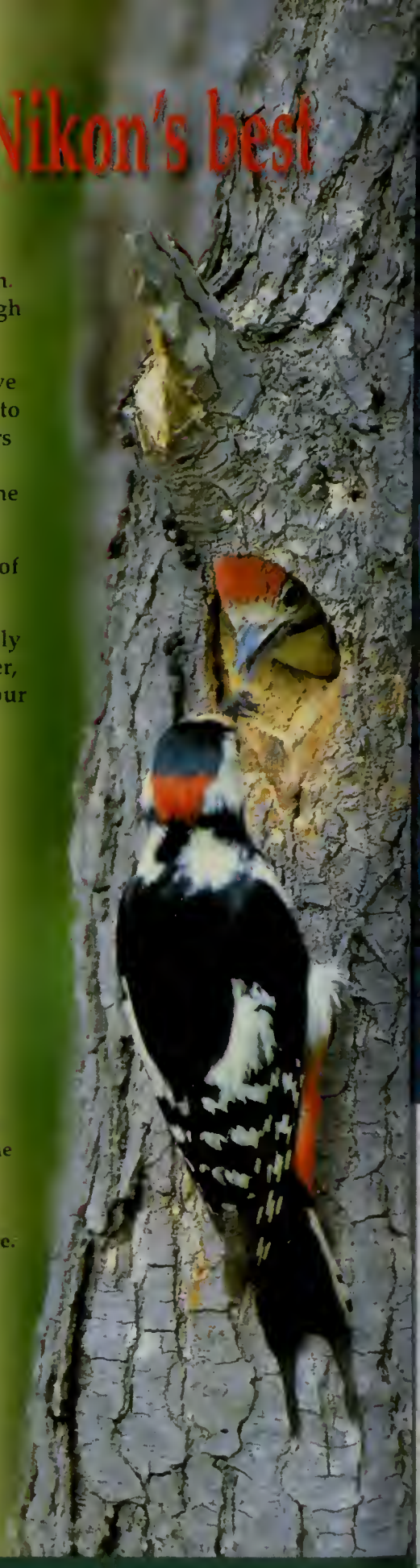
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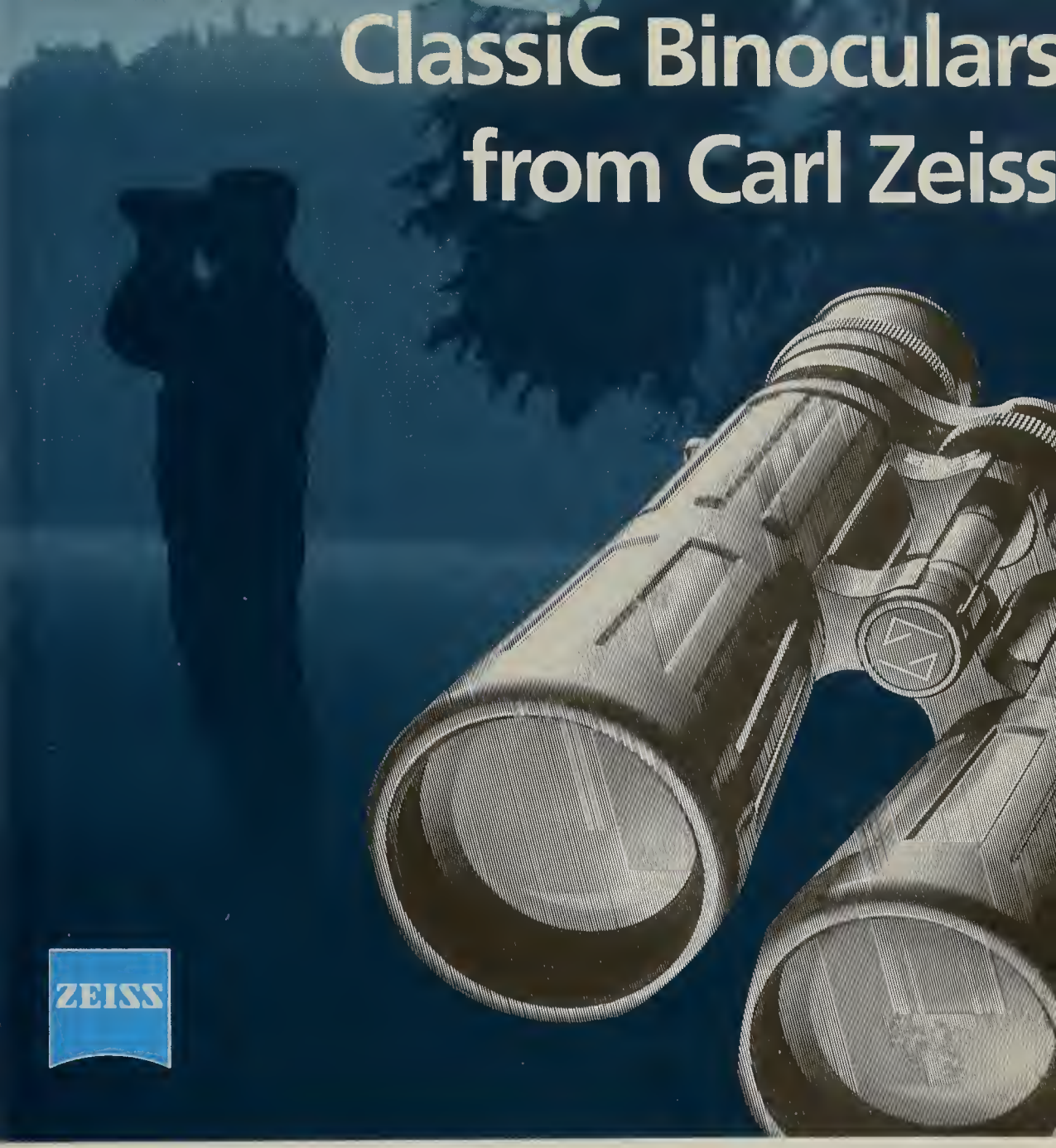


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eventually lead to a genetic adaptation to new habitats (see Lidicker 1962; Christian 1970). On the other hand, this emigration has forced the eagle to move from its favourite biotope of warm, dry oak *Quercus* forest, preferably on southern or southwestern slopes, which it occupied in zones 1 and 2, to larger and colder forest of Beech *Fagus sylvatica* and fir *Abies* generally more distant from its traditional hunting grounds.

In a previous study (Carlon 1994), I described a comparable population transfer of the Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*, which winters on the northern slopes of the West Pyrénées. It is equally interesting to note that the Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, in its search for additional food sources following its exceptional increase in numbers during recent decades (Carlon & Dunoguiez 1990), shows a reverse tendency: it occupies zone 3, but now also visits zones 1 and 2, in which, prior to 1990, it was rarely seen; it has been observed a number of times up to 40 km north of its breeding sites.

Table 1 illustrates the extent of the emigration to zone 3, and the current distribution by general habitat of the 58 known pairs of Booted Eagles in the Béarn study area.

Changes in hunting behaviour

Forest habitat

Owing to the progressive degradation of the habitat for the reasons given above, certain predators have been forced to make continual adaptations in order to survive in a constantly changing environment.

Since the end of the 1970s, three censuses, taken at five-year intervals in two woods, of 300 ha and 600 ha, in the Gave de Pau plain, have registered a marked decline, both qualitative and quantitative, in the avian populations, apart from a few exceptions. It is interesting to note that in these census areas a sharp decrease was also recorded in the numbers of migrant birds of a range of species both in spring and in autumn, probably again due to human disturbance. Clearly, this has adverse consequences for bird-eaters such as the Booted Eagle. Indeed, according to Kenward *et al.* (1987), the presence of such predators is governed by the existence of prey rather than of forests. This view is supported by the Booted Eagle's present-day occupancy of woods ranging in size from 70 ha to 200 ha, whereas at the time of our 1982-86 census the average was often well over 300 ha.

Partial change of strategy

While analysis of earlier data, mostly prior to 1960, shows the Booted Eagle as hunting over the forest and its environs and only rarely over open country (Cramp & Simmons 1980; Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* 1971), it is not surprising to find it, under present-day conditions, changing its hunting strategy to include areas hitherto rarely visited. These are open landscapes, cultivated land and semi-natural areas, riverine tree-belts and, most unexpectedly, towns.

These diverse habitats, incidentally, are sometimes a relatively long distance (4-10 km, occasionally even more) from the species' nesting territories, whereas previously, in Béarn, the Booted Eagle always hunted within 2-3 km of its eyrie (such 'stay-at-home' behaviour often enabled ornithologists to locate nests

quickly). In other parts of France, with less forest cover, individuals may be observed during the breeding season at considerably greater distances from the nest site, and in Algeria this eagle has been observed hunting far from its breeding territories (Maoli & Gaci 1992). In the study area in Pyrénées-Atlantiques, the area of the hunting range varies between 12 km^2 and 74 km^2.

Hunting in towns and villages

Because of the size, configuration and diversity of all the habitats in the study area, it is virtually impossible to ensure a sustained series of observations on predation in built-up areas. Nevertheless, the data, albeit fragmentary, are sufficiently numerous to confirm the regularity of these occurrences. For instance, a Booted Eagle was seen to capture a Blackbird *Turdus merula* in a park not far from the centre of Pau (J. Tischmacher verbally), and on 12th July 1991 I saw a Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* taken as it flew from a telegraph pole on a busy boulevard on the outskirts of Pau. Over the years, my colleagues and I have on a number of occasions seen this eagle flying low over built-up areas, always during the most active stage of the breeding period (mid June to mid August).

The data, in all, indicate that the ever-spreading urban environment, which harbours an increasingly larger number of prey species, has become a regular hunting ground for the Booted Eagle in regions where it has a strong population.

This hunting in or around towns demonstrates, moreover, an expansion of the diet linked to changes in the availability of prey species, which could be explained by the proliferation of the Collared Dove alone: an adaptation to the urban ecosystem, following the example of other species. To an even greater extent, Booted Eagles also now visit rural centres, generally closer to the nest site, where many penned and free-range domestic fowl are reared. Numerous attacks have been reported in the very centres of villages or in the enclosures of isolated farms, and I have twice witnessed the taking of three-month-old to six-month-old pullets in this way. The many prey remains found at eyries during the final pre-fledging stage of the young (late June to late July) bear witness to the heavy toll paid by gallinaceous birds (Galliformes), pigeons and doves (Columbidae) and ducks and geese (Anatidae). These prey categories may represent only a small part of the Booted Eagle's diet in this region over the whole breeding period, but, in view of the average weight of each individual prey item, contribute significantly to the total biomass consumed.

Over the past 20 years or so, the Booted Eagle has been noted prospecting diverse new habitats and on occasion has readily taken carrion. It has been seen many times flying over or perched on public refuse tips in the company of Black Kites, Red Kites *M. milvus*, Common Ravens *Corvus corax*, Magpies *Pica pica*, Eurasian Jays *Garrulus glandarius* and Carrion Crows *C. corone*, or else at the feeding stations for vultures. These visits demonstrate that the eagle is (or has become) an opportunist and can make do with carrion and refuse of all kinds. It should be added, however, that these sites, which have continually increased in number and in size in recent years, are visited by Booted Eagles, as well as by Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* and Eurasian Sparrowhawks *A. nisus*, in order also to prey on the numerous other species, especially passerines and rodents, that frequent them.

Further remarks

Throughout this 13-year study, it has become apparent that the Booted Eagle demonstrates plasticity as regards the diversity of its hunting grounds, its hunting methods and behaviour, its choice of prey, its breeding sites, and its ability to react promptly to changes in the environment with which it is confronted.

It also appears to be a rather more successful breeder in Béarn than in other parts of its range. Some authors (e.g. Brown & Amadon 1968; Cramp & Simmons 1980; Génsbøl 1986) have stated that the Booted Eagle normally fledges only one young; Bezzel (1985), however, indicated that the rearing of two young is not uncommon, while del Hoyo *et al.* (1994) gave an average of 1.5 chicks reared per pair. During the Béarn study, there were numerous cases of two young fledging. In 1984, two young fledged from two out of three nests (Carlon 1984), and this productivity was maintained in the same territories during the three drought years 1988-90: three nests each produced two young, and one young was reared regularly at a fourth, giving a mean productivity of 1.75.

Although the level of investigation has increased considerably during the past 20 years, the appearance or increase of this species in many départements of France encourages us to revise upwards our former estimate of the total French population (minimum of 500 pairs: Carlon 1987) and to place it somewhere between 800 and 1,200 pairs. This compares with the latest estimate of the Spanish population of 'perhaps 3,000 pairs' (del Hoyo *et al.* 1994).

Acknowledgments

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Richard Cruse initially brought my work to the attention of *British Birds* and suggested the publication of a modified version of it, and R. D. Chancellor kindly translated my original French into English for this purpose.

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[The 51-page special issue of *La Marie-Blanque* (vol. 4, 1995), all in French, containing the fuller version of this paper together with other results of the Booted Eagle study, can be purchased either direct from the author or from Richard Cruse (106 rue Navarrot, 64400 Oloron-Ste-Marie, France).]



LOOKING BACK

One hundred and fifty years ago: 'Avocet, *Recurvirostra avosetta*. The avocet is occasionally killed in spring, but is now a rare bird in Norfolk. It was formerly not uncommon, and nested habitually in some of the marshy parts of the county. It is said that a colony which once bred in marshes at Salthouse, was destroyed in order to obtain the feathers, for the purpose of making artificial flies.' (*Zoologist* 4: 1373, June 1846)

One hundred years ago, but perhaps relevant again now: 'A Plea for the Jay and Magpie. In a recent notice in the "Saturday Review" of a new ornithological work, the reviewer, after lamenting the decrease in our country of most of the more interesting birds, to make room for a monotonous plethora of game, remarked that the Jay [*Garrulus glandarius*] and Magpie [*Pica pica*] were getting very scarce, and he hinted that they were no particular loss, except from the point of view of the picturesque. A few lines further on he regretted the great and increasing abundance of Wood Pigeons [*Columba palumbus*]. I have not the remotest idea who the writer of the review in question may be; but, taking him from his writing to be a field-naturalist of some experience, the wonder in my mind is that it did not occur to him to connect these two facts together, because they seem to me to be the cause and effect.' (*Zoologist* Third series 20: 232-233, June 1896)

Also one hundred years ago: 'On June 4th [1896] I made an expedition to the Hoppen "Petts" for the purpose of inspecting the colony of Black-headed Gulls [*Larus ridibundus*]. These "petts," which lie about four miles south-east of Lydd, consist of two large pieces of water of unknown depth. They are furthermore fringed with treacherous reed-beds which possess all the qualities of a dangerous bog. They are also the home of many leeches. When within a mile of these "petts" I could discern a number of Black-headed Gulls lining the banks, and looking like so many lumps of white chalk. On a nearer approach they all rose up, full of clamorous consternation.' (*Zoologist* Third series 20: 250-251)

Fifty years ago, a sign of things to come: 'FIELDFARES IN DERBYSHIRE IN JUNE. I should like to record the presence of four Fieldfares (*Turdus pilaris*) on each of the two evenings of June 19th and 20th and five on June 21st at a hamlet, Wigley, near Chesterfield, about a thousand feet above sea level.' (*Brit. Birds* 39: 342-343)

NOTES

Identification of male Spectacled Warbler

With the acceptance of the male Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* at Filey, North Yorkshire, in May 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 554; *Ibis* 136: 254), following the reassessment and subsequent rejection of the previously accepted records (*Brit. Birds* 83: 482-483; 84: 431-432; *Ibis* 133: 219-223), it may be helpful to clarify the identification of male Spectacled Warbler in spring. Since 1988, I have studied the species in the field in Portugal, Mallorca and Cyprus during the months of March to June, as well as examining skins at the Natural History Museum, Tring.

The identification of Spectacled Warbler was recently covered in detail by Hadoram Shirihai, Alan Harris & David Cottridge (*Brit. Birds* 84: 423-430). Key features distinguishing Common Whitethroat *S. communis* and Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans* from Spectacled Warbler were discussed, mostly in relation to the 'difficult' female and first-winter plumages. Males in spring, generally regarded as 'easier', were to some extent neglected, and this note aims to complement the earlier paper.

STRUCTURE AND BEHAVIOUR

Spectacled is smaller and slimmer than Common Whitethroat, and the first impression is of a small nervous, 'excited' *Sylvia* warbler, more akin to Desert *S. nana* or Dartford Warbler *S. undata*. When flushed, its flight recalls that of a leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus* or a tit *Parus*, and it often disappears low into vegetation, from which it may then hop along the ground (again resembling Desert or Dartford Warblers) or inquisitively work its way towards the top of the bush, where it may sing, call or fly off.

When relaxed, Spectacled has a distinctive head shape, similar to that of a Desert Warbler or Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca*: a steep forehead flattens onto the crown, forming a more rounded head shape than that of Common Whitethroat, with the bill appearing quite long and spiky. The wing structure is also different from that of Common Whitethroat (cf. Svensson 1992), most notably in its short primary extension and the fact that the closed wing seems to occupy a smaller proportion of the total area on the bird. Given good views, it is possible to see the short projection of the primaries beyond the tertials on Spectacled Warbler—about four (or five), which bunch towards the wing tip—compared with the longer projection on Common Whitethroat—six or seven (sometimes eight) evenly spaced primary tips. The shortness of the wing helps to emphasise the impression of a proportionately long tail, and together these features contribute to the species' distinctive character.

The call of Spectacled is a characteristic 'tchrrr' or 'tchh tchh'. The song is like that of Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, but more rapid and with harsher notes.

PLUMAGE AND BARE PARTS

Although behaviour and structure may suggest this species, plumage details are

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Fig. 1. Spectacled Warblers *Sylvia conspicillata* (*Brian Small*)
Top left, first-winter male; middle, adult male in spring; right, adult male in autumn.
Centre bird, adult female in autumn.
Bottom bird, first-winter female.
Wings: left, adult Spectacled in autumn; middle, adult Common Whitethroat *S. communis* in autumn; right, first-winter Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans*.

crucial to its *identification*. In particular, observations should concentrate on the head, wing-coverts and tertials, as well as the underparts, rump and tail.

On the head, the most important feature is the black loral area, which extends more or less above the eye, onto the crown sides, and below it, onto the anterior ear-coverts. The black accentuates the white crescents above and below the eye. The black may be mottled with dark grey on first-summers or be obscured by pale grey feather tips when newly moulted, in autumn, winter or early spring. The crown and ear-coverts are a deep blue-grey, slate-grey or indigo-grey (recalling the colour of a male Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*). The nape and mantle feathers are usually tipped tawny, sometimes appearing greyish or brownish depending upon wear.

The wing-coverts and tertials are the most crucial areas to examine. These are an extremely bright rufous, almost orange after the complete autumn moult, but less so in spring, when the feathers are worn. The greater coverts in autumn appear as a plain area of orange-rufous (actually a rich raw sienna), but with close scrutiny they can be seen to have orange-rufous outer webs and darker, browner inner webs; these dark areas may appear on worn and displaced coverts in spring. On the tertials, the contrast between the black feather centres and the bright rufous or orange-rufous fringes creates a neater, more contrasting pattern than that on Common Whitethroat. The shape of the tertial centres is a thin, pointed 'arrowhead', especially on the inner two, but more rounded on the longest.

The white chin, throat and submoustachial area contrast with the black lores. A grey area appears as a result of abrasion on the throat, being most noticeable in June, thus reducing the extent of white. The breast and flanks are orange-pink in fresh plumage, abrading to a more intense vinous-pink, like the skin of a peach; the colour grades into the white of the belly and the off-white or buffish-white of the vent.

The grey rump contrasts with the browner mantle, and grades darker onto the central tail feathers. The prominent white on the outer rectrices contrasts markedly in flight with the very dark (almost black) inner feathers.

The bill of Spectacled Warbler is slender and pointed, with a dark, horn-black upper mandible and tip to the lower, and ochre-pink or straw-pink (more or less yellow) lower mandible and cutting edge of the upper. The legs are more intense in colour, being orange or straw. The orbital ring was noted by Svensson (1992) as brick-red, but on most of those of which I have had good views it has appeared as a black outline to the olive or reddish-brown iris (cf. Shirihai 1988). In my experience, the eye always looks darker than that of Common Whitethroat.

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Carrion Crows killing several Northern Lapwings

Just after 08.00 GMT on 12th November 1992, at Pitsford Reservoir, Northamptonshire, I witnessed up to eight Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* acting in a particularly aggressive manner. My attention was drawn to a nearby flock of Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* in a cereal field, when at least one of the plovers shrieked in alarm and the flock took flight. In typical fashion when alert to a hunting raptor, the flock tightened and swirled upwards. At least two Carrion Crows flew swiftly across the field as I looked in vain for the expected Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* or something similar. Failing to locate a predator, I watched the crows in case they had managed to latch on to it. One of them was standing in the field right next to a Lapwing which was clearly disabled and unable to fly; the Carrion Crow quickly killed the Lapwing with two or three heavy stabs to the head. At this point, I assumed that the Lapwing had been downed by the unseen raptor, and the Carrion Crow, ever the opportunist, had simply taken advantage of an easy meal. The second crow joined the first, and the unfortunate victim was plucked with much gusto.

As I watched, several other Carrion Crows (seemingly linked in pairs) arrived in the same field, by which time the Lapwings had returned. During the next 15-20 minutes, all of the Carrion Crows attacked and killed a total of eight Lapwings. Each attack was the same: a single crow (but not the same one each time) would fly quickly towards a single Lapwing which was either on the ground or flying low over it; with incredible ease, the crow would tumble a flying Lapwing, breaking or dislocating a wing, then land alongside the incapacitated victim and quickly kill it with downward stabs; Lapwings caught on the ground were simply stabbed in the head or upper breast. The victims were normally killed before a second crow arrived, and the pair usually demonstrated with head-bowing and raucous cawing. All of the Lapwings which were pursued and killed had appeared to be perfectly healthy.

Only one Lapwing was plucked and eaten, and more than just the original two Carrion Crows fed from this corpse. The remaining Lapwings were mostly ignored shortly after the fatal blow. On scanning the field, I noticed several other Lapwing bodies strewn around; there were also two injured Lapwings, which were soon spotted by the crows and similarly despatched.

Although aggression is common between Carrion Crows, I have never seen such behaviour targeted at an unrelated species. I find it hard to accept that this massacre was food-related, and I think it likely to be an 'aggressive display' between rival pairs.

The field is regularly used by flocks of Northern Lapwings and small numbers of Carrion Crows, but I have not witnessed any interaction before or since. The Lapwings soon 'forgot' the event and ceased to give alarm calls when the corvids were in their midst.

NEIL MCMAHON
Oriole House, 5 The Croft, Hanging Houghton, Northamptonshire NN6 9HW

EDITORIAL COMMENT Most members of the Behaviour Notes Panel found this account amazing and had never seen anything similar, but Derek Goodwin commented: 'I am also surprised that a healthy Lapwing, unless very tired for

some reason, could be caught by a crow. I have, however, frequently seen the male and more rarely the female (though very often unsure which sex) of a pair of Carrion Crows that come daily to my garden make such attacks in fast flight, and most often in a fast swoop, from the air or high in an oak *Quercus*, which culminates in an astonishingly fast-seeming pursuit flight, on Magpies *Pica pica*, Eurasian Jays *Garrulus glandarius*, Wood Pigeons *Columba palumbus*, domesticated Rock Doves *C. livia* and Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto*. So far, I have never seen the attacked bird actually grappled with, but I felt sure that the Carrion Crow would have attacked in earnest had it managed to catch the bird it flew at. Magpies appear to be positively hated, and the Carrion Crow will turn and swerve with great agility, but so far without success. Jays are "next on the list", but seldom give a Carrion Crow what appears to be a good enough chance (more or less in the open) to stimulate the sudden "hawk-like" attack. Magpies and Wood Pigeons, though they appear terrified during a chase, often return at once, and if the crow is on the lawn they may feed quite near it. The Carrion Crows never swoop at feeding Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* (though these are eating the same food), but when just-fledged young Starlings are there they often fly suddenly at one to try to catch it, although I have not seen them succeed.

'I think that Mr McMahon's idea that there was an element of redirected aggression by rival pairs of Carrion Crows (not of course in the case of the initial strike) is probably right. His observations that the second-comers were "seemingly linked in pairs" and the mutual display when its mate joined a "killer" ring very true.'

Nest-sharing by female Blue Tits

In spring 1988, while inspecting nestboxes in Marley Wood, Wytham, Oxfordshire, I discovered two female Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* incubating simultaneously in the same nest. Egg-laying commenced on 28th April, and on 11th May a female at least two years old was trapped and ringed while incubating an apparently complete clutch of three eggs, one of which was abnormally small. On 16th May, I found two females, the original one and an unringed first-year, side by side in the nest cup, both in the normal incubating posture, and facing in the same direction; both had well-developed brood patches. A third Blue Tit of unknown sex arrived, and gave alarm calls in the vicinity of the nest in response to alarm calls given by the females on release after examination. This third tit may, however, have been one of a pair nesting in an adjacent box. Both females were still incubating together on 31st May, well after the eggs should have hatched. By 6th June, the eggs were abandoned, presumably because they were infertile.

Nest-sharing, with more than one female using the same nest simultaneously for breeding, is not unknown among passerines, but simultaneous sharing of a nest cup is extremely unusual. Sharing is occasionally recorded among cavity-nesting polygynous species, but the clutch is usually twice the normal size and only one female incubates at a time (e.g. Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*: Holmes 1990). Polygyny occurs regularly among Blue Tits (Dhondt 1987). Instances of three adults feeding the young in a single nest (Wassmann 1989;

Wassmann & Butz 1990) were also assumed to involve polygyny, even though it was not known if more than one female had incubated, the sexes of the birds were unknown and both clutches were of normal size for a single clutch; brood adoption by an additional adult feeding the nestlings cannot be ruled out in these cases. My observation could be a result of polygyny, particularly if the third (unsexed) tit was a male, although, given the abnormally small clutch size, it is unlikely that both females had laid in the nest. It is also unusual for two female Blue Tits to tolerate each other's presence during incubation; indeed, they will occasionally kill intruding conspecifics in nestboxes.

An alternative explanation is that pairs of territorial species may occasionally share nest sites if these become limited. Willis (1935) and Tuchet-Jesson (1950) both recorded two pairs of Blue Tits sharing a site, but using separate nest cups. Hudde (1988) reported two female Blue Tits simultaneously incubating the same clutch, and two males subsequently fed the young; in this case, the density of nesting Blue Tits was three times higher than in the previous three years, so nest-site availability may have been a limiting factor, forcing two pairs to share a nest. Although the density of breeding tits in Marley in 1988 was higher than in previous years (by a factor of 1.5), plenty of nest sites still remained available.

A third possibility is the formation of a female-female pair. This has occurred with Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio*, and can result in simultaneous incubation by both females (Owen 1946; Pounds 1972). This seems the most plausible explanation for this instance of nest-sharing by Blue Tits in Marley Wood, and it could explain why the eggs were infertile and the clutch abnormally small.

Jeremy K. Blakey
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REVIEWS

Palearctic Birds: a checklist of the birds of Europe, North Africa and Asia north of the foothills of the Himalayas.

By Mark Beaman.

Harrier Publications, Stonyhurst, 1994. 168 pages. ISBN 0-9523391-0-2. Paperback £12.50.

The core of this book, comprising one-third of the whole, consists of a list of scientific and English names of species-level taxa of birds which occur or have occurred in the Palearctic region. Other parts are devoted to notes on taxonomy, distribution, omitted species, and lengthy discussions on English names. Both higher and species-level taxa are presented in a 'standard order', which is adopted from Voous. The reader is cautioned, however, that such a standard order should not be taken to imply taxonomic relationships. Notwithstanding this warning, it may be noted that the 'much-liked' Voous order is directly derived from that of Wetmore, whose sequence of families in turn can be traced back to the work of Furbringer and Gadow. Doubtlessly, the family sequence worked out, some 100 years ago, by these great German anatomists represented the best estimate of phylogenetic relationships that they could achieve, given systematic theory and methods of analysis prevalent at the time, and it has served as the base-line for many decades of systematic work. An alternative for the 'standard order' would be that of Sibley & Monroe (1990), based on the work by Sibley & Ahlquist (1990). Although often termed 'revolutionary' or 'highly controversial' in the popular literature, both Sibley & Ahlquist's work and the 'standard order' result from the same traditional theoretical and methodological premises (phenetic clustering based on general resemblance in either molecular or morphological data sets, ignoring problems of homology and homoplasy) and neither is more controversial than the other. An alphabetical sequence of families, and of species within families, would indeed be without implications about taxonomic relationships and could also be used 'with ease and familiarity', a stated purpose of this book. Because of the Mayrian approach adopted, the listing of species-level taxa does not allow for a very precise reflection of real-world avian diversity, but this will probably not be considered a great drawback by its intended users. Clearly, the present work does not pretend to offer more than a catalogue of 'species' which birders are 'allowed' to add to their lists of observed taxa. As such it will probably serve its purpose, although the addition of a column for 'ticks' would have added to its usefulness in this respect.

C. J. Hazevoet

Where to Watch Birds in Northeast England (Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Durham and Cleveland).

By Dave Britton and John Day.

A & C Black, London, 1995. 382 pages; over 30 line-drawings; over 60 site maps. ISBN 0-7136-3847-8. Paperback £12.99.

As a relative newcomer to Northeast England, I have found it difficult to get to grips with the diversity and richness of its many habitats, but, with the arrival of this new 'Where to Watch' guide, my troubles are over. Following the tried-and-tested format of the series, this book provides an extraordinary amount of information about where and when to go birding in the Northeast.

Looking at the few sites that I know well, I found the book remarkably accurate. Extending my search, I decided to visit areas of which I had no prior knowledge with my only reference being this book, and, on this count also, I found the information extensive but concise. Whether you are regularly birding in or just visiting this part of the country, this book is invaluable.

Steve Votier

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The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Northumbria.

Compiled and edited by John C. Day, Mike S. Hodgson and Nick Rossiter.

Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club, Benton, 1995. 340 pages; 118 line-drawings; 375 distribution maps. ISBN 0-9522039-5-2. £24.00.

The Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club, with only 300 members, covers one of the largest bird-recording areas in Britain. This large-format volume gives the results of the Club's 1988-93 tetrad survey in the traditional style (dot-distribution map facing a page of explanatory text, with an appropriate line-drawing). For ease of comparison, there are small inset maps showing the 10-km-square distributions for 1967-72 and 1988-93 as well as the larger-scale, more-detailed tetrad map (which has superimposed on it the distribution of land over 600 ft (183 m) above sea-level). The texts are excellent, summarising national trends as well as the results of past local surveys.

The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Northumbria is dedicated to the memory of Geoff Macfarlane, with whom I shared a tiny caravan on atlas fieldwork in the Scottish Highlands in 1971. Geoff would have been very proud of the achievements of John Day, Mike Hodgson, Nick Rossiter and all their collaborators in the Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club.

J. T. R. Sharrock

The Birds of Israel.

By Hadoram Shirihai.

Academic Press, London, 1996. 876 pages; 500 colour plates; 200 line-drawings; numerous maps. ISBN 0-12-640255-8. £65.00.

Every once in a while, a book appears and you say to yourself 'I wish I'd written that'. For me, this is one such book.

First, a brief general description of the package is required: large format, some 6-cm thick and over 900 pages of text and plates on high-quality paper. With its striking dust-jacket of wheatears in a desert wadi contrasting with a vivid blue Middle Eastern sky, terms such as monumental and lavish spring to mind for this giant of a national avifauna.

Part I is a general introduction, covering the history of ornithology in Israel and a detailed, ecologically based analysis of the breeding, wintering, migratory and vagrant species that have occurred.

The bulk of the tome comprises one-page to two-page accounts of Israel's 511 species. Each starts with a brief statement of the World and Middle East distributions. Then follows a paragraph 'Status, Habitat and General Occurrence', after which is a detailed section 'Distribution, Numbers and Annual Cycle'. This is enhanced by clear maps, often in colour, displaying distribution in the breeding season, in winter and during spring and autumn migration; there can be up to five maps for a single species.

One's first impressions on looking at these maps (especially those which record, by way of symbols, breeding densities and sporadic and localised distributions) is that they must be the result of many years of pre-planned, atlas fieldwork developed on a grid system. This is, in fact, not the case; information has simply been gathered from a variety of sources, especially observers' notebooks, by a team of co-ordinators. When Israel's first comprehensive breeding Atlas is produced (probably by the end of the Millennium), it will be interesting to compare it with the present work.

Under the species texts, the subspecies occurring in Israel are listed with a brief statement on their status. In most cases, comprehensive accounts of subspecific identification are given, which I found particularly useful.

The whole text is enlivened by numerous line-drawings by Alan Harris, and 96 plates (several species to a plate) of good-quality photographs covering many of the Israeli specialities. They are the finest set of photographs of Middle East species I have ever seen pulled together in one volume.

So, here is a model avifauna for others to aspire to. Hadoram Shirihai, the editors (Ehud Dovrat and David A. Christie) and the ten atlas area co-ordinators all deserve much praise.

Richard Porter



DIARY DATES

Compiled by Sheila D. Cobban

This list covers June 1996 to June 1997

27th June INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY. Conference on 'Species history: introductions and extinctions since the Ice Age'. SNH Conference Centre, Battleby, Perth. Details from Mrs M. Richards, University of St Andrews, Institute for Environmental History, St John's House, South Street, St Andrews, Fife KY16 9QW.

13th July BOU RECORDS COMMITTEE OPEN FORUM. Cley Village Hall, Norfolk. For details see page 285.

25th July to 9th August SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission £2.00 (free to SWLA members).

16th-18th August BRITISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR. Egleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water, Leicestershire.

31st August to 1st September SCOTTISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR. Vane Farm RSPB Reserve, Kinross. Details from RSPB Scottish Office, 17 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BN.

1st September YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR: closing date for entries.

7th-8th September IRISH BIRDWATCHING & WILDLIFE FAIR. Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, Oxford Island NNR, Craigavon, Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland. Details from RSPB Northern Ireland Office, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 4QT.

27th-29th September BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION AUTUMN MEETING. 'Birds, words and images.' Dartington Hall, Devon. Details from BOU, c/o Natural History Museum, Akeman Street, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

1st-3rd November SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie. Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

15th-17th November SCOTTISH RINGERS' CONFERENCE. Fife Arms Hotel, Braemar. Details from Bill Taylor, 22 Forbes Hill, Forres, Morayshire.

22nd-24th November UK JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE AND THE SEABIRD GROUP INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM. Seabirds in the Marine Environment. Glasgow, Scotland. Details from Dr J. B. Reid, JNCC, 17 Rubislaw Terrace, Aberdeen AB1 1XE.

6th-8th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Details from BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

3rd-5th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Details from BTO.

31st January BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR: closing date for entries.

7th-9th March RSPB/IRISH WILDBIRD CONSERVANCY ALL-IRELAND CONFERENCE. Details from RSPB, Northern Ireland Office.

15th March BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR: closing date for entries.

4th-6th April JOINT BOU ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND BTO WORLD BIRDING CONFERENCE (in association with the African Bird Club, the Neotropical Bird Club, the Oriental Bird Club and the Ornithological Society of the Middle East). Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Details from BOU or BTO.

4th-6th April RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. University of Warwick. Details from Christine McDowell, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Mrs S. D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson
Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Been to or going to Greece?

The Hellenic Ornithological Society is currently revising the Greek Important Bird Areas (IBA) list. Information from foreign birdwatchers is extremely valuable for this work and for bird conservation in general. All birdwatchers who have visited Greece are asked to send information about birds observed in sites that are or which might be designated as IBAs. If the name of the site is not known, the name of the nearest village or town should be used; rough maps and descriptions of sites are useful. Data sent should be quantitative if possible (even the roughest numerical estimation is more useful than vague abundance estimations such as 'many' or 'scarce'). Data on wintering and migrating birds in wetlands and breeding birds everywhere are of particular importance.

All birdwatchers planning to visit Greece in 1996 are invited to contact the HOS, mentioning the areas that they plan to visit, and will be informed about existing and prospective IBAs there, so that they can help by making field observations. In case of breeding records, standard atlas criteria for confirmation should be used. All contributors will be acknowledged. Please write mentioning 'IBA Project' to: Hellenic Ornithological Society, Em. Benaki 53, GR-106 81, Athens, Greece; tel./fax +30 1 3811271. (*Contributed by C. Papaconstantinou, IBA Scientific Co-ordinator*)

Lottery money for Staffordshire birds

A National Heritage Memorial Lottery Fund grant of £220,000 to the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust will benefit a range of species, including Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*, European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*, and Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*. The money, to match funds being raised by the Trust, will enable the acquisition and initial management of 240 acres (97 ha) of land within the Leek Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest. The Trust currently manages the 63-acre (25-ha) Baldstone nature reserve, some 10 km north of Leek, and the new acquisition, in two blocks, will add 103 acres (42 ha) of moorland at Black Bank and 137 acres (55 ha) of woodland at Gib Torr and Brund Hill. At over 300 acres (120 ha) the site will be the Trust's largest nature reserve.

Offers of help will be welcomed and more information is available from the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Coutts House, Sandon ST18 0DN, telephone 01889 508534.

RSPB President's Award goes to non-birdwatcher

The latest recipient of this Award is Alan Stubbs, well-known expert on hoverflies, crane flies and insect conservation generally. The Award was in recognition of his voluntary contribution to the work of the Biodiversity Challenge Group, where he represents Butterfly Conservation and has provided most of the input on invertebrate species. He is a rare example of a non-bird person receiving one of these awards, and it is nice to see the RSPB operate a biodiverse policy in relation to its awards.

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BOURC open forum

The BOU Records Committee is offering birders an opportunity to quiz its members on the thorny topics of categorisation (what about those Asian Brown *Muscicapa dauurica* and Mugimaki Flycatchers *Ficedula mugimaki*, for instance?), the assessment of potential escapes (Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* comes to mind), old records (such as the White-winged Larks *Melanocorypha leucoptera* discussed in *British Birds* 88: 365-371) and taxonomic changes and the British & Irish List (e.g. Greenish/Green/Two-barred Warblers *Phylloscopus trochiloides/P. (t.) nitidus/P. (t.) plumbeitarsus*; and Grey-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrushes *Catharus minimus/C. (m.) bicknelli*, *Brit. Birds* 89: 1-9).

Question-time is likely to be lively, though the BOURC itself notes that 'Obviously, attendance will be influenced to some extent by the presence of rare birds in other parts of the country!'.

The meeting, open to the public, will be held at Cley Village Hall from 2 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. on Saturday 13th July 1996. If you plan to go, please send a postcard to Tony Marr, Two Hoots, Old Hall Farm Barns, Cley next the Sea, Norfolk NR25 7RY.

Sussex Grasshopper Warblers

To update the news (*Brit. Birds* 88: 571), only five breeding-season records of Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* were reported in Sussex in 1995 (*SOS Newsletter* 136: 6).

Field Studies Council courses

Once again, an enormous range of over 400 special-interest courses is available at Britain's 11 Field Studies Centres, while a further programme of Overseas Study Tours is also on offer. Write to the Field Studies Council, Preston Montford, Shrewsbury SY4 1HW.

Sussex now and then

The 144-page *Sussex Bird Report* (no. 47, for 1994), edited by Mrs S. J. Patton, contains not only the usual splendidly full systematic list and papers on local surveys and censuses (Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra*, Grey Wagtails *Motacilla cinerea* and the Brede Valley), but also a nostalgic look at 'The South Downs in the 1940s' by Bill Bourne, a schoolboy there in the late 1930s and 1940s: 'I have subsequently been to a lot of good places for birds all round the world, but none have been better than the South Downs at dusk on a fine night in June before the bulldozers came, with butterflies giving way to moths over the flowers on the lynchets, Hobbies overhead, Nightingales, Nightjars and Woodlarks turning up all round and Stone Curlew calling in the distance. It is sad that more was not done to save them, but nobody said a word about it at the time and their fate appears to have been forgotten.'

The Membership Secretary of the Sussex Ornithological Society is J. E. Trowell, Lorimar, Main Road, Icklesham, Winchelsea TN36 4BS.

Spurn BO 50

Congratulations to Spurn Bird Observatory, which celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this month with a get-together at the Riverside Hotel in Kilnsea from 2 p.m. on Saturday 8th June. For more details, telephone Ian Walker on 01423 879408.

Although predated by island observatories such as Heligoland and Fair Isle, the establishment of Spurn BO in 1946 was the first for a mainland site, making it the first to be really accessible to large numbers of local birdwatchers. Apart from its ornithological records, it has served as a training ground for hosts of budding ringers and censusers, and as a great social centre for birdwatchers from near and far. The Riverside Hotel seems likely to be overflowing on 8th June (unless, of course, there are too many birds around).

IWRB becomes Wetlands International

During the International Conference on Wetlands and Development in Malaysia in October 1995, a new global alliance for wetland conservation was created. The new organisation is called *Wetlands International* (WI), and integrates three existing international water-bird and wetland organisations: the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB, based in the UK), the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB, based in Malaysia) and Wetlands for the Americas (WA, based in North America and Argentina).

Wetlands International was launched on 1st January 1996 and is now fully operational.

Moroccan records

The recently created Moroccan Rare Birds Committee, noting that most of the birders visiting Morocco are English and that many are *British Birds* readers, has requested as many records as possible, supported by descriptions. A list of the species for which notes are required by the MRBC can be obtained by writing to the Secretary of the MRBC: Prof. Jacques Franchimont, Quartier Abbas, Lmsahdi, rue n°6, n°22, 50.000 Meknès, Morocco.

Hants, better late . . .

In his editorial, Trevor Carpenter apologises for the late appearance of the *Hampshire Bird Report 1994*, published in March 1996, owing to an increase from 17,000 records received and processed in 1993 to 24,000 in 1994. He expresses the hope that the 1995 Report will appear before the end of the year. We hope so too, for this excellent 160-page compilation would be a strong contender for honours in the Best Annual Bird Report Awards.

The 1994 *Report* costs £5.00 (+50p p&p) and is obtainable from G. J. S. Rowland, 14 Dunmow Hill, Fleet, Hampshire GU13 9AN.

New Guinea news

Phil Gregory has contacted us with some mouthwatering bird records and details of two New Guinea publications. Apart from turning green with envy, what do you do when someone casually drops into the middle of a letter the fact that he has recently been watching Black Munia *Lonchura stygia*, Mottled Munia *L. hunsteini*, New Guinea Eagle *Harpyopsis novaeguineae* and New Guinea Flightless Rail *Megacrex inepta*? Phil comments that he is always happy to advise and assist visiting birdwatchers and can be contacted at PO Box 69, Tabubil 332, Western Province, Papua New Guinea.

The two publications are, first, a promotional edition of Phil's *The Birds of the OK Tedi Area*, available from the OTML Environmental Dept, PO Box 1, Tabubil 332, Western Province, Papua New Guinea, and, secondly, the May 1995 edition of *Muruk*, the journal of the Papua New Guinea Bird Society (PNGBS), containing a range of articles on bird records from throughout the country. The PNGBS can be contacted via Phil Gregory at the above address.

Bird bucks

Birds on the Texas coast generate significant spending by birdwatchers. It is said that Yellow-green Vireos *Vireo flavoviridis* at Laguna Atascosa refuge bring in $100,000 to the local economy, while the exciting migration at High Island sanctuary is responsible for a tourist spend of $2.5 million. Endangered Whooping Cranes *Grus americana* at the Aransas reserve bring $1.2 million to nearby towns. Meanwhile, in Kansas, the Department of Wildlife and Parks has recently created a hunting season for Sandhill Cranes *Grus canadensis*, against the advice of biologists and conservationists, who claim that, of the 600 shot each year (with proposed increases next year), at least 40% are from populations in need of protection. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department recognises the value of its birds and is preparing the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail with 50 bird hotspots: better to see birds than shoot them and economically more beneficial? Details of the trail from TP&WD, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744. (*Contributed by Rob Hume*)

Cambridge Report

The latest, 103-page *Report* of the Cambridge Bird Club, covering 1994, includes the obligatory, indeed quintessential systematic list, an account of the finding of the county's first-ever Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* in a bunting flock on 26th January (it over-wintered, staying over six weeks), and discussion of the increase in numbers and range of breeding Grey Wagtails *Motacilla cinerea* since the 1970s.

Copies are available (£6.50 incl. p&p) from Bob Jarman, 9 Romsey Road, Cambridge CB1 3DD.

'Rare Birds in Norway'

For a forthcoming book, the Norsk Sjeldenhetskomité for Fugl (Norwegian Rare Birds Committee) requests details of any Spectacled Eiders *Somateria fischeri* or other rare birds which have been seen in Norway by visiting birdwatchers. There are, apparently, rumours of a number of significant observations which have never been officially reported. Details of interesting observations and descriptions of rarities will be gratefully received by Andrew W. Clarke, Gronlia, Kyrresvingen 21, 3186 Horten, Norway.

Seabirds in the south and west

I can clearly remember one February day, boarding the Stranraer to Larne ferry, and anticipating a little seabird-watching. I was to be unlucky, and recorded nothing. If I had had access to the recently published Joint Nature Conservation Committee's (JNCC) report *Vulnerable Concentrations of Seabirds South and West of Britain*, I would have been aware that this was the least-productive month for seabirds in that sector of the Irish Sea. The report contains clear and precise maps of seabird distribution, on a monthly basis, from Dungeness westward and then north to Cape Wrath and the Faroe Islands. The list of bodies sponsoring the JNCC's 'Seabirds at Sea Programme' is impressive and includes not only the Department of Trade and Industry, but also several of the oil companies, including *Esso*, *Shell*, *BP*, *Amoco* and *Elf*. It is a little ironic that, as I write this, the media is full of details of the events resulting from the grounding of the *Sea Empress* at the entrance to Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire. A quick check through the maps shows that almost any time of the year, other than January and February, would have seen the oil hit major concentrations of seabirds. History shows that, wherever man transports oil, spillage will inevitably occur. At least we now have details of where and what is most vulnerable to marine pollution. (*BS*)

If you are planning any pelagic birding trips, this latest publication will provide useful information. Further details from the Seabirds at Sea Team, 17 Rubislaw Terrace, Aberdeen AB1 1XE.

Peregrine papers

The first issue of *Acta Ornithologica* vol. 30 is devoted to the proceedings of the symposium on the 'European Peregrine Falcon *Falco p. peregrinus*—its status and future', held in Poland in November 1994. The 15 papers are in English (or, in one instance, German), rather than Polish, with English abstracts and Polish summaries, so are very accessible to English-speaking Peregrine students.

For further details, to subscribe or to order a single issue ($20 payable to the Museum & Institute of Zoology at Powszechny Bank Kredytowy SA, XIII O/Warszawa, nr. 370044-3450, Al Jerozolimskie 7, 00-495 Warsawa, Poland), write to The Museum & Institute of Zoology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Wilcza 64, PL 00-679 Warszawa, Poland.

The Royal Mail does it again

How nice for the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust to have its fiftieth anniversary recognised by a special issue of stamps.

But why, oh why was Tunnicliffe artwork (nice as it is) used instead of wildfowl paintings by the late Sir Peter Scott, founder of the Trust?

As with that 'Ragged Robin' Christmas stamp fiasco (*Brit. Birds* 88: 571), one wonders who, if anyone, advises the Royal Mail. For all natural history subjects, it *ought* to be the Society of Wildlife Artists.

Norwegian Mammal Atlas

The Norwegian Zoological Society (NZF) is undertaking a national mammal atlas project. Records from 1980 onwards will be used, and data collection will continue until at least the end of 1997, based on 10-km squares. All mammal species (both terrestrial and marine) will be included, as will records from the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. The NZF welcomes records from visitors to Norway, including observations of tracks, feeding signs, shed antlers and so on.

Please send details of (1) species; (2) date (at least year and month/season); (3) place—give accurate grid references (UTM-system) if possible, otherwise an accurate description of the location (e.g. 1 km north of Sel church); (4) county (fylke) and district (kommune); and (5) type of observation (e.g. animal seen, tracks found, etc.) together with any comments. For some species (e.g. bats, whales) photographs, or at least full descriptive accounts, are required, and for species such as shrews and small rodents skulls and/or lower jaws are needed as documentation. Photographs of tracks should include an object that can be used to judge size (such as a ruler or matchbox). Please supply a duplicate print or transparency, not the original. All observers will be acknowledged in the published *Atlas*.

Please send observations to Pattedyratlas, The Norwegian Zoological Society, Postbox 102 Blindern, N-0314 Oslo, Norway.

Restoring Dorset's heaths

In February, a new agreement was signed between Forest Enterprise and English Nature to give the go-ahead for a unique grazing project in Wareham Forest. For the past five years, foresters have been re-creating heathland in the area as part of the Forests and Heathlands Project. Now they are to begin ten years of trials to test the impact of grazing on 800 acres (325 ha) of Wareham Forest's heaths and forestry plantation, in a bid to prove that low-level grazing will not harm young trees. If successful, it could boost the return of traditional grazing management to heaths throughout the region, which in turn should increase numbers of heathland rarities such as the Silver-studded Blue Butterfly *Plebejus argus*, Marsh Gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe* and Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*. More than 85% of Dorset heaths has been lost during the last 200 years, but, despite that, Britain still holds the largest remaining area of 'Dorset'-type lowland heaths in the World.

Waterways code

Following the fiasco on the River Ivel last June (*Brit. Birds* 88: 441), it was good to hear the following intentions regarding our canals: 'A draft Code of Practice, designed to ensure good environmental management of canals and river navigations, has been launched by British Waterways, which runs the country's canals. This document will ensure staff seek more environmental information before planning routine work programmes, waterside developments or engineering and repair works. Rather than acting as a set of detailed instructions, it is designed to raise issues, provide information, and suggest actions fitting local circumstances. Environmental issues addressed range from the conservation of habitats and species, to assessment of water and sediment quality, the repair of historic structures and aesthetic impacts of work. A final version of the Code will be produced in April after consultation with a range of organisations and users.' (*habitat* vol. 32, no. 1, January 1996)

Ouse Washes anniversary

At the end of last year, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's centre at Welney on the Ouse Washes celebrated its 25th anniversary. Originally conceived by the late Sir Peter Scott, whose first visit to the area in the 1930s as a Cambridge undergraduate left him with a lasting impression, the creation of the reserve began in 1967 with the donation of a 102-acre (41-ha) wash to the Trust that he founded in 1946. Lagoons were created for the birds and access created for visitors, with the main observatory completed in 1970. Since those early days when visitors obtained permits from the house of the first warden, Josh Scott, a wash shepherd, other land was acquired, bringing the total area of the reserve up to 1,000 acres (400 ha). Subsequently, a reception centre sprang up in the mid 1970s catering to visitors' needs and, a year ago, a £75,000 extension to the main observatory was opened.

For further information about visiting this Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust reserve, phone 01353-860711. We wish those involved every success for the next 25 years and beyond.

New Solent Visitor Centre

The National Lottery Fund gave Hampshire County Council's Solent coast a Valentine's Day present by awarding £206,000 to convert a former coastguard cottage on the seafront at Hill Head into a new visitor centre for the Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Mike Hancock, said that it was a great opportunity to build on the huge investment that the Council had made in coastal conservation and environmental protection. Council rangers currently look after 670 ha of the East Solent coast from the upper stretches of the River Hamble to Titchfield Haven, including a number of different habitats. Titchfield Haven itself, 116 ha in extent, is an SSSI, proposed SPA/Ramsar site and proposed SAC, on account of its being an important resort for wintering wildfowl, including large numbers of Eurasian Wigeons *Anas penelope* and Common Teals *A. crecca*, and internationally important numbers of Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*. The rich wetland breeding-bird community includes a nationally important population of Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* and is the only regular Hampshire breeding site for Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus*.

Further information can be obtained from the site manager on 01329-662145.

Butterfly distribution

Many birdwatchers also use their close-focusing binoculars to look at butterflies. Those in the Home Counties are likely to find a new Butterfly Conservation publication of great interest. A 44-page report on butterflies in Hertfordshire and Middlesex in 1995 includes not only tetrad maps and weekly-occurrence charts for each species, but also long, fascinating explanatory texts summarising trends and speculating on reasons for them.

Copies are available (price £2.00) from John Murray, Field End, Marshalls Heath, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire AL4 8HS.

Tundra or Whooper or Mute?

The difficulties of separating juvenile swans *Cygnus* are addressed in a 35-page, well-illustrated paper by Dieter Königstedt and Peter Barthel (in German, but with an English summary) in the latest issue of *Limicola*.

A single back issue costs DM16 from Über dem Salzgraben 11, OT Drüber, D-37574 Einbeck, Germany.

Butterfly Conservation Symposium

Butterfly Conservation is holding its 2nd International Symposium, at Warwick University during 6th-8th September 1996. Non-members are eligible to attend the Symposium, and further details can be obtained from Butterfly Conservation, PO Box 222, Dedham, Colchester, Essex CO7 6EY.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

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MONTHLY MARATHON



Plate 24 obviously showed a pratincole *Glareola*, but which one? Entrants decided on Oriental *G. maldivarum* (50%), Collared *G. pratincola* (27%) or Black-winged *G. nordmanni* (23%). The most-chosen species was the right answer. This Oriental Pratincole was photographed by Dr R. J. Chandler in Western Australia in March 1995.

Most competitors are now near the start, with 0, 1 or 2 correct answers; there is a small bunch of ten entrants on three correct answers; Michael J. Tarrant (Lincolnshire) has achieved five in a row; Dick Forsman and Hannu Jännes (both Finland) are on six in a row; and Jon Holt (Buckinghamshire) and Anthony McGeehan (Co. Down) still lead the field with seven-in-a-row sequences of correct answers.

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Plate 119. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 120: tenth stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. *Read the rules on page 24 of the January issue*, then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th July 1996.



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan
This summary covers the period 16th April to 12th May 1996.
These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* Near Snettisham (Norfolk), 1st-12th May.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* Douglas (Strathclyde), 12th May.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* White-phase individual, Tory Island (Co. Donegal), 24th April.

American Coot *Fulica americana* Stodmarsh (Kent), 16th-28th April.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* Saltee Islands (Co. Wexford), 6th May; Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 8th-9th May (first records since 1990).

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* Draycote Water (Warwickshire), 12th May.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Fairburn Ings (West Yorkshire), 12th May.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* Kinsale Marsh (Co. Cork), 27th April.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* St Agnes (Scilly), 6th-9th May.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* First-year, Blennerville (Co. Kerry), 8th April.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* Portland Bill (Dorset), 5th May.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* At least five and perhaps up to eight individuals from 2nd May.

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* Liverpool (Merseyside), 29th April; Andover (Hampshire), 5th May.



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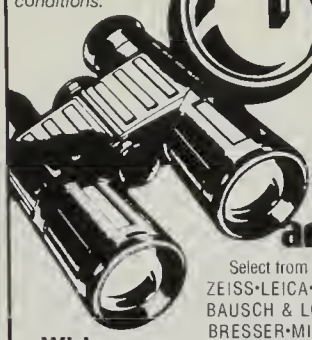
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